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**The Afterlife of DEFA in Post-Unification Germany: Characteristics,
Traditions and Cultural Legacy**

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**The Afterlife of DEFA in Post-Unification Germany: Characteristics,
Traditions and Cultural Legacy**

by

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

December, 2006

Dedication

Für meine Familie

Acknowledgements

First and foremost it is more than justified to thank my two dissertation advisers, Kit Belgum and Bernd Moeller, who did an outstanding job providing me with the right balance of feedback and room to breathe. Their encouragement, critical reading, and honest talks in the inevitable times of doubt helped me to complete this project. I would like to thank my committee, Pascale Bos, Janet Swaffar, and David Crew, for serving as readers of the dissertation. All three have been tremendous inspirations with their own outstanding scholarship and their kind words. My thanks also go to Zsuzsanna Abrams and Nina Warnke who always had an open ear and an open door. The time of my research in Berlin would not have been as efficient without Wolfgang Mackiewicz at the *Freie Universität* who freed up many hours by allowing me to work for the *Sprachenzentrum* at home. An invaluable help was the library staff at the *Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen "Konrad Wolf" Babelsberg*. Lydia Wiehring von Wendrin, Kirsten Otto and Renate Göthe made me feel at home right away, provided me with a quiet area for my research, and arranged that the material I needed was not removed from my work place. They showed sincere interest in my project and pointed me to hidden gems in their DEFA collection. It was a pleasure to work there.

Everybody who finished a dissertation knows that it requires persistence. My friends and my family provided the support and love I needed to complete this project. A

huge thank-you goes to my colleagues at the University of Texas at Austin, especially to my reliable and thorough editor Lee Holt, Mariana Ivanova who provided valuable information about Bulgarian cinema, and Jason Williamson, Judith Hammer, Kersten Horn, and Karen Ewing for their friendship throughout the years. I would like to thank my parents, grandparents, and my brother for their financial support, their interest in my work and their frequent visits to Texas, Berlin, and Illinois. Countless recordings of DEFA films on German TV and newspaper clippings mailed across the Atlantic Ocean made this project possible.

Finally, I would like to thank my own family, Victoria and Max, for their love and numerous enjoyable hours. Thanks, Victoria, for your encouragement, putting up with a stressed husband, taking Max out on the weekends and staying at home during the week when he came down with another ear infection to give me time to write. Thanks also to Max who reminded me every day that playing with cars, running around in puddles, going down a slide on the playground, and reading the ABC book seven times in a row are also important in life. Without you my life would not be complete.

The Afterlife of DEFA in Post-Unification Germany: Characteristics, Traditions and Cultural Legacy

Publication No. _____

Sebastian Heiduschke, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2006

Supervisors: Kirsten Belgum and Hans-Bernhard Moeller

This dissertation provides insight how the former East German company DEFA lives on in contemporary German society after unification. The Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft DEFA was the centralized, state-owned film company in East Germany and later the German Democratic Republic from 1946 through 1992. After the privatization procedures of all former state-owned property that accompanied German unification, the company was sold. Its films were handed over to a trust in charge of preserving the DEFA legacy.

This institutional history of the DEFA looks at five examples to illustrate the extent of DEFA's afterlife in German society. Testing Eric Hobsbawm's thesis of an "invented tradition" the dissertation uses the method of cultural archeology to document

the transition of the former DEFA studio at Babelsberg and how DEFA films became vehicles of East German cultural memory after the sale of the DEFA studio. This project describes the different preservation efforts of six institutions succeeding the DEFA, and explains the role of each institution. It proposes a reading of the current screening and broadcasting situation of DEFA films as regional cinema in the Federal Republic. Lastly the dissertation takes a new direction in DEFA scholarship with the interpretation of data and results taken from a 2004 reception study of DEFA film audiences in the Federal Republic. The study closes with a case study of DEFA fan culture as one specific instance of DEFA film reception in Germany.

Unlike other studies of DEFA, this dissertation approaches DEFA film as cultural legacy of East Germany that has operated across cultural boundaries and decades. It presents an example for new strategies in the interpretation of DEFA film and East German culture in the Federal Republic of Germany.

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Introduction

If you – like Christiane Kerner in Wolfgang Becker's Good Bye Lenin (2003) – had fallen into a coma right before the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and woke up in East Berlin at the present time, what would you recognize from the old GDR? Sixteen years, compared to the nine months of Christiane's absence, are a long time, and your family would struggle to explain how Germany has changed since 1990. To protect you the way Alex and Ariane sheltered their mother from experiencing the final months of the GDR before unification on October 3, 1990, one would have to be even more creative than Alex, who salvaged the old GDR furniture from the basement, dressed in true GDR fashion, and filled Dutch pickles in jars that once held the now famous GDR pickle *Spreewaldgurke*. Certainly, there would be no need to hire the former cosmonaut and national hero Sigmund Jähn, like Alex did in Becker's film, to be the head of the GDR. In our contemporary world, East German Angela Merkel occupies the post of German chancellor. Alex's dilemma of finding former GDR products that had disappeared from GDR shelves after the fall of the Wall and had been replaced with West products does not exist either. Many products, including Florena beauty products, Vita Cola, and f6 cigarettes, made their successful comeback in East Germany a few months after unification. Your family could even take you in a car without having to be blindfolded like Christiane. Driving on the road did not change because the legal blood alcohol level to drive changed from the West German 0.08 to the East German standard of 0.05, the amiable GDR *Ampelmann* has replaced even some of the generic pedestrian lights in the old West Berlin, and all over East Germany, you are still allowed to make a right turn on red if the green arrow sign next to the traffic lights permits it.

Other things would be more difficult for your family to explain. After all, former citizens of the GDR have found their places in the new society and have meanwhile embraced the new way of life. Like West Germans, some travel abroad, own expensive electronic equipment, drive fast cars, live in spacious apartments, and have held secure positions for more than sixteen years.¹ Your family would struggle to come up with a reason for the absence of such GDR cars as the Trabant and the Wartburg on the roads and, unlike Alex, who reversed reality by having the GDR borders opened for “refugees” from the Federal Republic, this explanation would not hold up. Advertisements for products that used to be from the West are omnipresent now, and Alex’s explanation of the Coca-Cola display on the side of a house façade as originally “a Socialist invention stolen by the West” would, at best, fool someone only once. And what would they do if you asked them to switch on the TV so you could catch up on some news and watch a few old DEFA films at night? They would have to come clean and tell you that only the Federal Republic of Germany is left, while the GDR along with its institutions and its culture do not exist any longer.

Not quite so. A close look at East Germany sixteen years after German unification reveals that much has changed since 1990. As a consequence of political unification on October 3, the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) adapted Western legal structures and became a part of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The communist East Germany turned into a democratic society in 1989, which eventually led to the decision of East German politicians to form five federal states and to join the West German federation of eleven states. In exchange for the GDR’s political

¹ Here, I refer to an East German who – despite his reservations about the Federal Republic – has taken advantage of his freedom since 1990. He is a follower of the PDS/ Linkspartei and self-proclaimed socialist, yet has traveled to three continents since the *Wende*, owns a gigantic collection of more than 3,000 VHS tapes, 2,000 DVDs, two computers, two digital video recorders, and subscribes to Germany’s digital pay-TV platform Premiere. He was one of the participants in the study I discuss in chapter 4.

sovereignty, billions of *Deutsche Mark* were invested to help the ailing East German economy rise to West German standards. Government subsidies for companies willing to invest in East Germany, a newly implemented solidarity tax (*Solidaritätszuschlag*) paid by West Germans, and the privatization of all formerly people-owned companies (*Volkseigener Betrieb*) helped to cover the cost for the much-needed modernization of infrastructure in the East. Slowly, the relics of forty years of poor economic planning disappeared, while the overall quality of life in East Germany improved and brought the East economically almost up to par with West Germany.

The majority of East Germans embraced the transformation from their East German society to the new West German way of life. After the *Wende* in 1989, marked by peaceful revolution, opening of the borders, and subsequent democratization of the GDR, many East Germans rushed to fulfill their desire for Western commodities such as cars, video recording devices, and even grocery brands (Blum, “Ostalgie” 229). Their commercial East German counterparts became obsolete and vanished – following the new rules of supply and demand – from the East German market (Berdahl, “(N)Ostalgie” 194). A similar trend could be observed with GDR culture. With West German films and Hollywood fare now omnipresent at East German movie theaters, interest in GDR specific entertainment waned even more rapidly than in the months and years before the *Wende*, when imported films from the West surpassed East German films in popularity (Meurer 163). It appeared as if, for the moment, the GDR had expired.

However, representations of the GDR resurfaced in the early 1990s during the *Ostalgie* wave, when public perception shifted from the refusal of East German cultural products to a longing for these objects from the past. Re-issued GDR products began to sell in East German stores, young people donned fashion bearing the GDR logo, and icons of everyday culture, for example the *Trabant* car, experienced a renaissance during

the first half of the 1990s. After the GDR disappeared, these objects were now free from ideological references to the totalitarian political system of the GDR and claimed perhaps “the longing for the ‘unspoiled’ state of East Germany”(Schlipphacke 71). *Ostalgie* may also have been the reaction of some East German to the harsh realities of life in the Federal Republic, challenges previously unknown in the GDR, such as unemployment, high cost of living, and their disappointment with a system that rejected “the elements of the socialist system or the eastern German lifestyle” (Zelle 3) entirely. At any rate, these representations placed the GDR past in a favorable light and reflected an “emerging East German consciousness” along with a “profound notion of loss and the attempts to come to terms with it” (Blum, “Ostalgie” 230).

One example of such a representation stands at the center of this dissertation, which looks at the fate of the formerly people-owned East German film company *Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft* (DEFA) and its films after DEFA was sold in 1992 by the *Treuhand* as part of the privatization process of former GDR companies. This work traces the afterlife of DEFA in the new cultural environment of the Federal Republic of Germany, presenting the institutional history of the film company and how DEFA continued to exist in new forms of successor institutions. It also looks at DEFA films as physical products of the studio, how the films are integrated and how they function in the media landscape of post-unification Germany, and it studies audiences of DEFA films and their reception of these films in East Germany after 1992. I use the term “afterlife” for this cultural transition to imply that, along with the continuation of the institution of DEFA in another culture, significant changes took place that resulted in the termination of this institution’s previous form(s). The term “afterlife” furthermore suggests that a variety of social, cultural, and political conditions may have caused the decline and the temporary end of the institution until it resurfaced in a modified shape. The term

“afterlife” also suggests that the institution re-emerged with at least some of its traditions intact, while its appearance, its form of existence, and even its significance in society changed. DEFA, as a film studio and production company, ceased to exist, whereas DEFA as a cultural institution lived on in the Federal Republic.

DEFA films are thriving in their new cultural environment. This dissertation examines why the films have received so much attention within the past decade in Germany. Today, DEFA films are more popular than ever before, which is a surprising turn compared to the steady decline of attendance figures of DEFA films since the 1950s. Historically, the films were not too beloved among East Germans, who preferred imports from West Germany and Hollywood, and West Germans saw only a limited number of DEFA films on rare occasions. Exceptions were the famous DEFA fairytales that still receive praise for their meticulous production style. Generations of German children grew up with them, and many viewers, particularly West Germans, were usually unaware that these films originated in the GDR. After the *Wende*, there was a renaissance of DEFA films, first among East Germans, and, with the advent of the films on DVD, also among West German audiences.

Evidently, changes took place that caused a shift in the recognition of DEFA films among German audiences, which raises further questions about the nature of these changes. This dissertation investigates problematic aspects of this transformation, such as: a) the type of changes that caused the new appreciation of DEFA films; b) the spatial and temporal location of the changes in Germany; c) the protagonists involved in the changes; and d) reasons why the changes might have taken place. The surprisingly fast transformation of DEFA films from a tolerated, yet unloved medium of the GDR’s cultural realm, to a representation of East German memory in the Federal Republic, may also point to the desire to establish DEFA as (East) German tradition.

DEFA SCHOLARSHIP

“In stark contrast to its West German counterpart, East German cinema remains a largely unknown phenomenon in the English-speaking world and one which has received relatively little attention in the academic press” (Allan ix). Since the publication of Seán Allan and John Sandford’s DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946-1992 (1999), which first paved the way for the study of East German cinema, much has changed. In the seven years after Allan’s preface to the collection of essays about the DEFA, numerous articles, theses, and a handful of books have been written that focus solely on DEFA cinema. This dissertation combines the information derived from extensive research and field work to situate DEFA in the contemporary, i.e. post-unification, Federal Republic, thereby opening up a new direction in DEFA scholarship.

To a great extent, DEFA scholarship in the United States has focused on integrating DEFA cinema into the realm of Eastern European cinema studies. Barton Byg, founding father of the DEFA library at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and DEFA studies in the United States, speculated about the potential of DEFA films as early as 1995. Byg’s interest in DEFA cinema, first stated ten years ago, also influenced the publication of Daniela Berghahn’s book, Hollywood behind the Wall (2005). Her comparative study about DEFA films situates the films in an ambivalent position between German national cinema and Eastern European cinema. With the help of a number of case studies, Berghahn establishes DEFA cinema as an independent entity detached from West German cinema. Other book-length studies about DEFA in the English language are Leonie Naughton’s That was the Wild East (2002), which explains the continuities between DEFA films, films of the *Wende*, and post-unification German films; the AICGS essay collection, Moving Images of East Germany (2002); Joshua Feinstein’s book about

depictions of daily life in East German cinema (2002); and Laura McGee's study about the last generation of DEFA directors (2003).

The gaps in English-language DEFA scholarship become apparent very quickly for someone interested in this topic. For example, an introduction to the cinema of the German Democratic Republic is yet to be written. Although this dissertation does not provide such an introduction, which would certainly be an immense contribution to the field of German cinema studies, it nevertheless strives to achieve two aims. First, it wants to create an even broader interest in the cinema of the German Democratic Republic/ East Germany among North American scholars, and second, it hopes to facilitate an understanding of the importance of DEFA for the cultural memory of German society by showing the significance of DEFA cinema in post-unification Germany.

Recent publications about German film have finally "discovered" East German cinema, breaking with the decade-long perception of West German film as the exclusive representative of national German cinema. Early on, Prinzler's Chronik des deutschen Films (1995) combined the separate timelines of East and West German Cinema into one to show the continuities of German film from its beginning to the present. Meurer's comparative study (2000) about the correlation of cinema and national identities during the final decade of divided Germany argues for a strong influence of West German Cinema in the GDR. He implies that the idea of two separate national cinemas is no longer valid since West German films dominate the East German market. Nora Alter's book about German documentaries (2002) goes beyond the boundaries of East and West, using documentaries from East and West, regardless of their origin, to document the tradition of German nonfiction cinema. Akin to her approach to German film beyond the boundaries of East and West, the essay collection The German Cinema Book (2002) and

the revised edition of Geschichte des deutschen Films (2004) emphasize the facets of German Cinema that show East and West German Cinema as related but still discrete occurrences of German Cinema. Finally, Sabine Hake defines the amalgamation of East and West German Cinema as German National Cinema (2001), with DEFA Cinema occupying a strong position due to its high quality of filmmaking.

Despite the fact that English language scholarship includes East German cinema as an essential, if alternative, part of German film history, it still lags far behind the wide variety of German publications about DEFA. Although case studies of DEFA films and publications about the correlation of DEFA and GDR politics exist in North American and British literature, details are seldom found in English language publications. Discussions reflected in elementary works about film in the GDR, as, for example, in Blum and Blumenberg's collection Film in der DDR (1977), Blunk's Filmland DDR (1990), and Der DEFA-Spielfilm in den 80er Jahren – Chancen für die 90er? (1992) – three works which mark out the scholarly boundaries of writing about DEFA as it still existed – simply are not present in English literature. The same is true for evaluations of DEFA's legacy such as those by Giesenfeld (1993), the Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek (1993) and Finke (2001), which are significant for understanding DEFA's fate after unification. Literature with elementary information about DEFA cinema, such as Alfred Wilkening's Betriebsgeschichte (1981) and the collection Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg: DEFA-Spielfilme, 1946-1992 (1994) are both essential and comprehensive accounts of DEFA's significance. For more objective approaches, Christel Drawer's 1996 collection of DEFA film critiques by West German film critic Heinz Kersten provides essential reading. By comparison, even issues of New German

Critique (2001) and Film History (2006)² devoted to DEFA fail to address the knowledge gap about DEFA Cinema in North America.

Methodologically, recent studies about the GDR show a trend in their reference to collective memory as a theoretical framework. In the context of DEFA scholarship, this concept of a shared past mirrors tendencies apparent in present-day Germany. Many scholars studying collective memory refer to the works of Maurice Halbwachs (1980, 1992). According to Halbwachs and his followers, collective memories are shared representations of the past that are reflected in the actions of a larger entity. DEFA cinema certainly could be seen as a carrier of collective memory – as diverse and contested such traces of memory may be. The current popularity of DEFA cinema in East Germany, for instance, documents an underlying common ground of East German heritage and personal histories. DEFA films may be historically inaccurate depictions of the GDR past, but they remain historical monuments of an era of divided Germany. The history of the GDR is reflected in these films through the depiction of events; they are memorials of a GDR beyond the political dictatorship of the SED and its secret police. Indeed, the collective memory of the normal aspects of everyday life among former citizens of the GDR, coupled with the wish to suppress the less pleasant facets of a totalitarian society, has lead many East Germans to accept DEFA cinema as nostalgic cultural legacy of the GDR.

Jan Assmann (1995) employs another useful term for the discussion of DEFA Cinema within the realm of the Federal Republic. His term “cultural memory” can be applied to the objectified culture that DEFA cinema began to take on after the demise of the GDR and the DEFA studios. According to his classification of modes of *potentiality* and *actuality*, storing DEFA films in the archive, DEFA regalia at a museum, and

² Only one essay referred to West German film, all others focused on DEFA cinema.

collections of DEFA films in libraries represent the mode of potentiality, whereas the redefinition of DEFA films in the new social and historical context of the Federal Republic renders them actuality in their functions in exhibits, screenings, research and discussion. These functions reinvent DEFA as a German legacy, as a cultural memory of unified Germany. This new, expanded view traces the transition of DEFA cinema from its existence as the national film studio of the GDR to a historical object in the Federal Republic. Similar approaches were undertaken before scholars such as Herff (1997), who compared the memory work about the Nazi past in both Germanys and the amalgamation of those memories after unification, as well as the collection about memory work by Confino and Fritzsche (2002) that engages in new approaches to the study of German culture and society. Missing from academic discussion so far, however, is an investigation of DEFA's role and impact on post-unification Germany.

This omission is rather surprising, given the fact that, since 1990, scholarship about the GDR has increased exponentially. Since the end of the GDR, historians have taken up the task to explain the GDR by looking at it from two perspectives. On the one hand, they document everyday life and the social history of the GDR (Lindenberger 1999; 2003, Badstübner 2000, Bauernkämper 2005), while another approach attempts to clarify the impact of the GDR's political system on the lives of its citizens, often employing specific case studies (Kocka and Sabrow 1994, Lewis and McKenzie 1995, Jarausch 1997, Wolle 1998). An investigation of DEFA cinema as a state-controlled institution would be located between these approaches. Certainly, authoritarian structures were omnipresent in DEFA's studios: the SED controlled artistic output and ensured congruity between politics and art. However, it is widely acknowledged that the directors of DEFA films were allowed to voice some degree of disapproval with politics and criticize shortcomings to offer an outlet for the dissatisfaction of the people.

Even though certain scholars tend to no longer equate DEFA cinema with GDR cinema, viewing it rather as a voice of the East, the theme of DEFA as social critic recurs. The previous animosity of many East Germans towards their cinema as an SED vehicle has been replaced with a more generous evaluation of the GDR media in general. While Hoff (1990) still paints a bleak picture of the reception of DEFA television series in the GDR, and Prommer (1999) emphasizes the popularity of films from the West when she describes the film titles GDR citizens choose when going to their local movie theaters, more recent studies argue that East Germans, presented with choices in their entertainment, did not automatically opt for Western media, instead turning to their familiar programs and regional information. Of special interest here is a study by Früh (2001) that focuses on the peculiarities of television programming in East Germany. Stiehler's study about the lack of Western television in some areas of the GDR and the impact on the population (2001), and Meyen's book about media use in the GDR (2003), find media use by GDR citizens to be more nuanced and less influenced by Western media than previously assumed.

Similar preferences for East German entertainment can be observed today, as this dissertation will show. East Germans are still interested in television programs and films popular in the GDR prior to unification, but to my knowledge, despite an overall growth in the number of research publications about DEFA since 1989, studies about the role and impact of East German media in post-unification Germany are missing from academic discussions thus far. Only very specific studies about the past of the DEFA cover virtually all aspects of filmmaking in the GDR. There are two valuable additions to the annual books Apropos: Film³ published by the DEFA-Stiftung. Schwarzweiß und Farbe: DEFA-Dokumentarfilme 1946-92 (1996) covers the history of DEFA documentaries,

³ They replaced the GDR journal Film und Fernsehen, which survived unification by nine years.

while Die Trick-Fabrik. DEFA-Animationsfilme 1955-1990 (2003) looks at DEFA's animated films. The information conveyed in both studies of film genres helps to understand the structure of the DEFA studios and their output while filmmaking was still underway at the DEFA, but its researched time frame does not go beyond the year 1992. Two other publications, Poss and Warnecke's Spur der Filme: Zeitzeugen über die DEFA (2006), and Gersch' Szenen eines Landes: die DDR und ihre Filme (2006), point to the ways in which DEFA films influence memory in post-unification Germany. The case studies of some other genres, Alltagsgeschichten, Märchen, and Vergangene Zeiten (1998), confirm the contemporary relevance of DEFA films. Thus, it is important to look at how these films function in their environment to demonstrate continuities and ruptures that surfaced after unification.

Less obvious than the significance of the DEFA films themselves may be the symbolic meaning of the DEFA studio for East Germans. Since the golden time of German cinema, typically associated with the UFA films and movie stars of Babelsberg, the studios near Berlin have been synonymous with the success of German film. After the Second World War, the DEFA made use of this legacy and established itself as the rightful successor to the Weimar film tradition. DEFA's founding members appropriated the past to legitimate this claim, modeling their name after UFA, and eventually occupying the old UFA studios. The notion of Babelsberg as such a mythical place has only been referred to in single chapters by Naughton (2002) and Berghahn (2005), although Geiss (1994), Giesen (1998), and Locatelli (2001) presuppose such a fascination with Babelsberg on the side of East Germans in their accounts of the changes in the studios when the studios were sold in 1992. However, a number of publications about the significance of the DEFA for East Germany and the connotations associated with the sale of the studios after unification (Giesen 1991; Jacobsen 1992; Schenk 1994; Baer

1994, 2004) try to raise awareness that German filmmaking took place on these premises between 1946 and 1992. Illing (2002) and the accompanying book Babelsberg – Gesichter einer Filmstadt (2005) prove again and again the steady attraction to the location. The latter, accompanying the updated Babelsberg exhibition at the Filmmuseum Potsdam, takes the importance of the studios even further when it dedicates its main emphasis to the four decades under the aegis of DEFA.

Altogether, scholarship about DEFA shows that – despite the end of DEFA filmmaking almost 15 years ago – DEFA is alive. It is a growing part of the German entertainment industry with a target audience of at least 17 million Germans, and trends indicate that DEFA films will grow in popularity as they become more easily available.⁴ DEFA fairytales and children's films are especially well known to West Germans, an important additional audience, while an increasing number of scholars and film enthusiasts all over the globe now use and have access to DEFA films.

GENESIS

The idea for this dissertation developed from the discovery of a noticeable gap in DEFA scholarship. If one does not take into account a handful of footnotes referencing the privatization and sale of DEFA, literature about the East German film company typically ends with either 1990, the year of DEFA's initial privatization, or 1992, when the sale of DEFA was completed. More than a decade later, there is still no documentation of DEFA's fate, which lead to two questions: What had happened to the DEFA films, and why did nobody write about their present situation? After all, the films

⁴ At the time of unification in 1990, approximately 17 million GDR citizens became citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany. The target audience of DEFA films, of course, is not only the former population of the GDR as chapter 4 exemplifies. Especially DEFA fairytales and children's films are well known to West Germans. Additionally, an increasing number of scholars and film enthusiasts all over the globe has better access to DEFA films, facilitated by the DEFA-Stiftung.

did not exist in a cultural vacuum; they had been cultural products of the GDR that somehow must have ended up in the Federal Republic – even if they only existed as original prints forgotten in the dusty basement of a German archive located at the outmost eastern border to Poland.

My research of DEFA films led me to discover that the films were in fact still present in post-unification Germany, and it was striking, yet not surprising, that the films were limited almost exclusively to East Germany. Thus, the assumption arose that DEFA films had a special significance for East Germans. Similar to other “success stories” and reappearances of other East German consumer products, the films would be, according to the initial thesis of this dissertation, a case of *Ostalgie* with all of its connotations and implications one might draw. Essentially, the films – or rather the act of watching the films – would evoke an East German identity among their audience.

However, with no data available to test this thesis, it was crucial to collect first-hand information about audience motivations of East Germans in a field study. The results that originated from the surveys and interviews in this study clearly contradicted my original thesis; an overwhelming majority of the participants mentioned reasons other than nostalgia or, in this specific case, *Ostalgie*, as their reason for watching DEFA films. Hence, a variety of other reasons necessitated the modification of this project to a much broader approach that viewed DEFA as part of a larger cultural trend. As I began to explore the various component elements of DEFA film and the legacy of the DEFA tradition/institution, I realized I would need to develop an overarching approach to comprehend how the remnants of DEFA film remained or came alive again in post-unification Germany. Ultimately, peeling away the various layers of social and institutional traces led me to develop the notion of “cultural archaeology.”

CULTURAL ARCHEOLOGY

This study proposes a new method for cultural studies – cultural archeology – in order to show how DEFA as part of a past culture continues to exist in a new cultural environment. My initial research indicated that DEFA, as an element of a past culture, transformed and adapted to exist in a new cultural environment. It became important to look at the previous form of DEFA as cultural institution, how DEFA changed, and how it – in a modified form as its successor institutions – was integrated into the new culture. The crucial point was to find an appropriate method to approach DEFA from a new perspective that would do justice to both its past history in the GDR, its transformation, and finally its new role in the changed environment. Here, the discipline of archeology offered cultural archeology as a suitable methodology for the research of cultures of the past.

Cultural archeology helps to re-create the past in the present with the help of historical artifacts that document the history of the past. Looking at DEFA in an entirely new cultural context reminded me of an archeologist's approach to explaining a culture. It all starts with the discovery of one small artifact. In the course of his work, the archeologist stakes out a promising area to dig further, and expands his search systematically to the vicinity of the artifact to ensure that he finds the largest amount of artifacts possible. He slowly removes the ground layer by layer in small portions and sifts them to separate the artifacts from the matter covering it. After that, he loosens the excess dirt that sticks to the artifact from being buried for a long time, and carefully scrapes it away to retain the original character of the artifact as much as possible. What follows is the careful description of the artifact down to minute details, since any of them may be significant later. Then, the artifact is categorized and placed next to other artifacts in order to – hopefully – form an object. The more artifacts that are added to the

array, the easier it is to recognize the shape, structure and meaning of the object; even if all the artifacts cannot be found, it is still possible to understand the previous function of the object in the past.

Archeology allows us to look at the history and culture of more than one period. The deeper an archeologist digs, the older and potentially more interesting the artifacts are. They may represent more than one culture, or the same artifact may have changed its meaning throughout time. One can observe cultural changes and compare societal and cultural structures. At the same time, it becomes clear that societies change significantly over time, and the older an artifact is, the harder it might be to discover its original meaning, since the surface of the artifact is subject to attrition even in the ground. Sometimes, the sediments may simply be impossible to explain in terms of the time period in question; this is when archeologists compare the artifact to remnants of other cultures, or even try to look for parallels to the present.

Often, these discoveries seem to be insignificant at first, such as single shards of a vase, but many of them taken together allow archeologists to see the bigger picture. With a large enough number of objects, archeologists are even able to formulate theories about a culture and draw conclusions about its society. They compare objects in contemporary culture with the artifacts they discovered, and try to establish familiar patterns between cultures. Eventually, cultural archeology paves the road for future studies of the culture and allows others to use the artifacts as foundation of their studies.⁵

Although scholars of cultural studies use similar methods, I found these methods inadequate in their potential to address two aspects: first, the constant flux of culture in a society, and second, the diversity within a culture, which in my opinion are both of much

⁵ I am thinking here of Keith Haring's painting style that was described as "complex cultural archeology" by art historian Suzi Gablik. She launched a discussion among her colleagues when she termed his style "New Wave Aztec," referring to Haring's relationship with ethnographic art.

larger importance in a culture than often assumed. Cultural archeology offered a solution that included both attributes and was flexible enough to incorporate other aspects of culture as well.

Culture does not stand still; it changes its appearance constantly when it borrows from the past and forms itself new, which makes it difficult to describe what contemporary culture looks like from a vantage point in the present. While other methodologies allow readings of culture at fixed points in the past, they interpret periods of culture that are already considered closed. Cultural archeology is different as it takes culture from the past, but shows the direct implications of this past culture on the present, regardless of the distance in time between the two cultures. By using cultural archeology, one sees the immediate links that span from the past to the present and revives the past in the present culture.

Culture is not unilateral; it comes to life through artists, the art objects created by these artists, and audiences who engage in art. Other methodologies often focus on the concept of *l'art pour l'art* and leave out the audience, the third, perhaps most important, factor of the equation. Without audiences, culture would be a silent dialogue between the artist and the work. In reality, culture depends on the engagement and active participation of audiences; in fact, the only way to keep culture alive is the positive reaction and reinforcement of audiences to new structures. And yet, all artists and audiences are diverse because of their unique personal histories in the past. Since diversity is inherent to each culture, a methodology to explain this culture should be able to consider audience with its variety of individual histories. Cultural archeology reserves space for the individuality of the artists while it does not forget the audience as an integral participant in the construction of culture.

Cultural archeology offers an approach to describe the current state of a topic by studying it from a variety of perspectives, thereby taking into account the flexibility of the present society. Additionally, the multitude of perspectives allows an easier contrast with the past, and a documentation of continuities or changes within this society. Cultural archeology as a tool of cultural studies can also help to answer general questions about the way we assess cultural legacy. It proves that culture does not belong to only one system, but that it is diverse. And while the results of this methodology may lead to disparate narratives – analogous to the number of shards it takes to reconstruct a vase – there is always the vision of the end product – the reconstructed vase – that provide the overarching concept.

With the same vigilance that archeologists demonstrate towards a new artifact, I began to look for traces of DEFA. The pieces I discovered, i.e. the various forms and institutions of DEFA's "afterlife," were subjected to a scrutinizing research of their GDR past, similar to an archeologist studying the history of a culture to learn about the background of the objects. Institution after institution was examined, until I had "unearthed" the entire institutional history of DEFA after 1990, something that had been missing from DEFA scholarship up to this point. The following process of describing the artifacts – in this case the documentation of each institution's history along with each other's interactions – was the centerpiece of the research, as only the clear documentation of each "shard" would determine the exact location in the entire "vase." In other words, an interpretation of the DEFA as it now existed in a variety of institutions was only possible by providing a clear picture of how these institutions were interlinked.

As I began to reflect on the significance of DEFA as a former film studio, I realized I would need to expand the initial "discovery and documentation stage" to include more artifacts. To look at DEFA's legacy meant to include not only the film

company, but also its films as products of the studio and film audiences as “consumers” of these products. If an archeologist attempted a cultural analysis based on artifacts, it would be vital to research not only the shards of the vase, but also the contents of the vase, and the people who put the vase to use. Only the knowledge of how all elements interacted would provide a complete and thorough picture of this part of the culture. For that matter, more than one artifact was required for a reliable interpretation attempt. The same was true for this dissertation; DEFA films were still watched by audiences, and DEFA’s successors provided the films.

The analysis of the artifacts at the end of each project studied with cultural archeology uses all the data and documentation that was assembled. Since cultural archeology is a methodological framework that provides the tools to discover and document, it needs to borrow other methods to interpret the relations it exposed previously. Yet, it answers general questions about the way we assess cultural legacy. It brings the remnants of an old culture within a new culture to the surface and provides the methodological framework to collect the material needed in preparation for future in-depth analysis.

This dissertation used cultural archeology to contrast the present situation of DEFA, its films, and its audiences, with the past. The DEFA artifacts that I discovered in current German society reveal both ruptures and continuities with DEFA’s past. The sea change in the reception of DEFA films in post-unification Germany indicates that new structures and practices were established after the sale of DEFA in 1992 to ensure continuity between DEFA’s successors in the Federal Republic and the former GDR institution. The reason for the new popularity of the films must then be based on the fact that DEFA is no longer present as a company, and the films now represent the former

company. DEFA in post-unification, I suggest, is thriving because it is a symbol of East German tradition.

THE INVENTION OF DEFA TRADITION

In addition to tracing the remnants or shards of DEFA film that are present in post-unification Germany, I also identified processes of remembering and reconstructing an idea of what DEFA meant and could mean today. To understand this act of envisioning of DEFA as (East) German cultural memory I turned to another theoretical concept. Eric Hobsbawm's seminal essay about the invention of tradition, which he developed to comprehend the elements of 19th-century nationalism, offers an approach to explain the unexpected success of DEFA films in current German society as a result of the films becoming a tradition. Hobsbawm, a social historian, researched the links between society and its traditions. He showed that – contrary to popular belief – traditions are often not very old, but recently instituted and sometimes invented to imply continuity with the past (1). Hobsbawm coined the term “invented tradition” and showed how a number of traditions were actually invented to legitimize an institution by giving it the aura of being old and established.

Hobsbawm used the concept of an “invented tradition” in two ways: first, to describe traditions whose invention is easy to date, since they were formally instituted and documented; and second, to describe traditions that appear within a brief time and are sometimes difficult to trace. He links both types to formalized practices and rituals that are performed to authenticate the traditions and integrate them in a society.

I understand “invented tradition” in the latter sense to look at the transformation of DEFA from a disliked medium of the GDR to a popular representation of an East German past. Invented tradition seems to mirror precisely the development into a legacy

without being instituted officially; instead, the process of invention itself may be hard, perhaps almost impossible, to trace, as it could be counterproductive if a tradition were to be unveiled as being “invented.” While Hobsbawm is not always concerned with the forces behind the inventions and their reasons for the invention as much as with the performance and the result, I include the agents of the transformation and the development throughout the stages of this transformation to explain the changes that eventually lead to the institution of a tradition.

Invented traditions are either “responses to [...] old situations” or create their own past by applying an “obligatory repetition” (2). This dissertation approaches DEFA in its post-unification manifestations precisely in this way; it aims to contrast the institution with its afterlife by tracing the forms in which DEFA lives on in German culture and society and demonstrating practices and symbolic rituals. DEFA is no longer present in physical structures such as its film studio; instead, it lives on in the work of its successor institutions, its films that are screened in the Federal Republic, and the memories of film audiences, all of which are essentially based on “formalized practices” (2). A close look at five examples of such invented DEFA traditions required this project to focus on DEFA’s institutional history and its transformation from a concrete institution in the GDR to a cultural concept. Hobsbawm’s approach helps understand how contemporary Germans view, reconstruct, shape, imagine, invent and invest meaning in DEFA film.

The first chapter is the documentation of an unsuccessful attempt to form the former DEFA feature film studio into a mythical location of East German filmmaking after a struggle between former DEFA employees and the new owners for the right to invent a tradition. Babelsberg, as a mythical location of German film, was at the center of a heated debate between two groups about the future of the studio. Here, one can easily see how the studio acted as an “emotionally and symbolically charged sign,” (11)

which was to be placed in the foreground as placeholder for the long-lasting tradition that the studio symbolized. While some East Germans attempted to keep the studio under its trademark sign DEFA as an emotional symbol and as a signifier of cultural independence of East German filmmaking in the tradition of DEFA cinema, the new owners, led by West German director Volker Schlöndorff, redesigned the entire studio not only structurally, but also introduced a set of symbolic signs as indicators of a new tradition. The “traditions” of the studio, which according to Hobsbawm mirror their “entire background, thought and culture” (11), appear to be reflected in the new name (*Studio Babelsberg*) and logo (a stylized Maria from Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*, one of the first features produced at the studio during its UFA years). Essentially, the conflict at the studio is, at its core, a struggle for cultural hegemony: whoever claims Babelsberg and decides on its fate also has the power to determine which traditions are worth being invented. The fact that DEFA “lost” its studio ended any activities to couple the East German film company and Babelsberg in a tradition: DEFA ceased to exist in its previous form as name and production company. The DEFA films, on the other hand, took on the role of becoming the emotionally charged symbols that DEFA itself failed to develop into, and were preserved by DEFA’s successors as its legacy.

These six successors to DEFA – the *DEFA-Stiftung*, *Bundesarchiv-Filmmuseum*, *Progress Filmverleih*, *Icestorm Entertainment*, *Filmpark Babelsberg*, and *Filmmuseum Potsdam* – are the topic of the second chapter, which illustrates the process of inventing the DEFA tradition. After 1992, the void left after DEFA was to be filled: DEFA films, i.e. material from the past to form such a tradition, existed, but the agents necessary to create it were missing. Hobsbawm states that “rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which the ‘old’ traditions had been designed [...] or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators [...] are

eliminated“ (4-5), which created the dilemma of DEFA films as a tradition in post-unification Germany without an institution as their symbolic point of reference. New “movements for the defence or revival of traditions” (7-8) were required to get involved – or be “invented” themselves – in order to fill the demand for the invented DEFA tradition, a matter of urgency because of a seven-year break in the continuity after the end of the GDR, or in Hobsbawm’s words, the “old ways are no longer available or viable” (8).

The demand for DEFA films as East German tradition in post-unification society becomes apparent in the third chapter of the dissertation. Specifically, this chapter is concerned with the fact that the invention of DEFA films as East German tradition is one of the “important symptoms and therefore indicators of problems which might not otherwise be recognized” (12). This part of the dissertation examines the current exposure of DEFA films in German media and claims that the situation of the films is a reflection of German society, in that DEFA films are still limited in their on-screen presence to East Germany. While this makes DEFA films, at least for the moment, regional films that are shown in East German cinemas and on regional East German TV channels, the films have seen an increase in popularity among West Germans since their launch on DVDs, which include accompanying bonus material that provides background information about DEFA film, East German society, and the GDR. Slowly yet steadily, the DEFA tradition seems to be moving away from being a dividing element between East and West Germans. As DEFA films become more established as traditions in time, new generations born into post-unification Germany lack the immediate knowledge of the past. They approach DEFA films indiscriminately and rely on them as depictions of “the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behavior” (9) of the GDR, thus accepting the invented traditions as historic truths. Hobsbawm also believes that this

link between invented traditions and their reception in society is important because only via the “study of the history of society” (12) is it possible to understand the traditions. In other words, to entirely understand the role of DEFA films in post-unification Germany, it is crucial to look at the current reception situation of DEFA films.

Therefore, the final two chapters of this dissertation deal with contemporary audiences of DEFA films to test Hobsbawm’s thesis that invented traditions partially establish or symbolize “social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities” (9). Whereas the results of a field study – designed specifically for this dissertation – seem to contradict Hobsbawm, since most of the participants stated reasons of personal nature, for example memories, some responses clearly indicated that DEFA films represented GDR history and were believed to create an East German identity. Watching DEFA films may then be what Hobsbawm calls “semi-ritual practices” (12) “performed” by audiences to compare the filmic depiction of history with their own experiences. It is also noteworthy that survey answers and interview comments from the field study exhibit parallels that may indicate the successful invention of DEFA films as a tradition.

The final chapter takes up this theory, approaching two internet sites as manifestations of DEFA fan culture and interpreting them as crucial examples of Hobsbawm’s previously mentioned thesis of a “membership of [...] artificial communities” (9). The way these DEFA internet fan sites are structured also indicates how DEFA films have earned a devoted fellowship. These two sites, and the development of “artificial communities” by means of these sites, provides evidence for the success of the invention of a DEFA tradition.

EVOLUTION OF THE PROJECT

As with many research projects, this dissertation underwent adjustments to its subject matter and organizational changes during the course of my research. Originally, I envisioned a project about *Ostalgie* with its genesis, a comparison of definitions, and an interpretation of the various meanings of the term for East and West Germans. In the course of my research, looking at how objects and icons from the former GDR were present in post-unification Germany, I discovered a strong presence of DEFA films. Surprisingly, there were no scholarly explanations for this presence; the renaissance of DEFA films also seemed to be entirely ignored by TV shows, magazines, and other accounts of *Ostalgie* in Germany. Instead, the screening and broadcast of DEFA films was limited to the former GDR, which led me to believe that they had an exclusive significance for East Germans. I assumed that the films were used by East Germans to create an East German identity as a special form of *Ostalgie*.

My research among East Germans returned results contradictory to this thesis, since only a small group mentioned nostalgia or *Ostalgie* as a motivating factor to seek out DEFA films. Yet, the fact that DEFA films were primarily shown in East Germany and were seen for the most part by East German audiences motivated me to look at DEFA from a different perspective: I was curious to find out why DEFA films were so popular with this part of the population, how exactly DEFA functioned in post-unification German society, and what implication this would have for German culture.

To that end I posed five basic questions to serve as my new organizational frame. Taken together, I hoped they would address the transformation of DEFA after unification and how the new “DEFA” was integrated in the new culture. Each chapter answers one of these questions, beginning with basic information about DEFA as institution and its change after unification, continuing with the current situation of DEFA in Germany,

progressing over the fate of DEFA films and their presence in post-unification culture to DEFA audiences, their interest and their motivation, and closing with a case study of DEFA film reception.

My decision to change the perspective on the dissertation also meant not including case studies and exemplary readings of DEFA films at this point. This study does not focus on genre studies, the psychology of protagonists, or, on a more general level, the interpretation of DEFA films as modes of artistic expression. Instead of traditional readings of films as aesthetic objects – common for cultural studies – DEFA films are introduced in this study as physical products of the East German film company DEFA. The role these films/ products play as cultural objects in their new environment becomes the key question of this dissertation.

Nevertheless, the aesthetic component of the films is addressed indirectly through the audience responses in the chapter about the reception of DEFA films. In terms of the reception of DEFA films among contemporary German audiences, one can make only limited claims about the role of films for some audiences. The study of audience reception was not representative for the entire German population, its population of 80 million, or the 17 million Germans who used to live in the GDR. All results are based on a relatively small number of only 160 questionnaires – not enough for a representative sample – and five interviews with a predominantly East German target audience. The questionnaires were collected from people in Berlin and East Germany who attended DEFA film screenings and agreed to participate in a survey. The results from this sample showed that the films were attractive to East Germans of all age groups, social backgrounds, and political affiliations. Although even the most recent DEFA films were almost 15 years old, they represented a common past, and symbolized East German culture for the participants. The films functioned as reminders of personal history, as

testimonies of GDR history, and as nostalgic objects of the past. To regular DEFA film audiences, the films are vehicles of their memories, works of high quality with timeless significance, and examples of the “DEFA style,” i.e., films focusing on the meticulous development of characters and plot.

The significance of DEFA films, especially in Germany, is central in the dissertation because of the films’ role as vehicles of history and memory for East Germans. Thus, the study only considers the role of DEFA films in Germany, although the films are present in other countries. Retrospectives in Vienna, Austria in 2004, and more recently at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, suggest that the films continue to fascinate outside Germany’s national borders as well. In the US, the DEFA Library at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and First Run Features, a seller of DEFA films, promote the DEFA legacy successfully to their audience. In contrast to Germany, US audiences are largely comprised of viewers with academic interest in film. University courses in many fields have taken advantage of the easy access to the films via the DEFA library as a central coordinating institution in the US.

This dissertation is also not concerned with the non-academic afterlife of DEFA in Germany. DEFA films at universities were a part of research and teaching in the West even before unification. The University Oldenburg holds a large collection of films and screen plays, which has been expanded since 1990. In East Germany, the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen “Konrad Wolf” at Babelsberg, with its DEFA collection, is the most prominent example of a flourishing academic afterlife and the first choice for DEFA research. One does not have to be a prophet to know that the films will remain present in academia; however the same may not be true for non-academic audiences.

Taken as a whole, this dissertation is a snapshot of DEFA afterlife as it currently exists in Germany. The situation of DEFA films has changed rapidly and will no doubt

continue to do so. A few decades from now, when only a few citizens of the former GDR are left, scholars will have to re-evaluate the afterlife of DEFA to see if interest in DEFA films continues to increase, whether such innovations as a DEFA channel on digital TV will reach ever-wider audiences in East and West Germany, or whether the films will continue to draw audiences at all.

Chapter 1

DEFA and the “Babelsberg Myth”

Located approximately 30 minutes southwest of Berlin the city of Potsdam harbored UFA before and DEFA after the Second World War. Before Studio Babelsberg took over as the new owner in 1992, the film studio was at the center of a heated conflict between East and West Germans. This chapter examines the struggle over the meaning of Studio Babelsberg, arguing that East and West Germans showed significant interest in the studio because of its central position in debates over the meaning of German culture. In other words, the verbal tug-of-war in 1992 was not only a struggle for the right to own a lucrative property in an attractive financial market; it was also a fight over control of Babelsberg’s historical meaning and its promise as the site of a new invented tradition.

When the pending sale of East Germany’s former state-controlled film company DEFA to the French company CGE was announced in 1992, it provoked outrage among East Germans and DEFA employees who viewed the sale as the sell-out of DEFA to foreign investors. Under the direction of West German filmmaker Volker Schlöndorff, who had been appointed manager by the French investors, the DEFA studio was renamed Studio Babelsberg and reorganized to conform to the economic system of the FRG. Many former employees were laid off immediately, others received annual contracts only to be laid off later, and some retained their positions and continued to work for the new studio in so-called *ABM* programs.⁶

⁶ *Arbeitsbeschaffende Maßnahmen* were launched after unification to allow a smoother transition of the former East German workforce into West German society. Companies received the salaries by the federal government to pay workers instead of laying off massive amounts right away.

Schlöndorff further enraged East Germans when he described the equipment at the DEFA studio as antiquated, the organizational structure as chaotic, and more than 40 years of film production as unattractive (“Film in Not”). Viewed as the derogatory remarks of a *Besserwessi* about the East German film industry, Schlöndorff’s comments provoked protest among East Germans. Local Potsdam and Berlin newspapers published readers’ letters to the editor, while former DEFA directors wrote guest columns in newspapers and gave talks about the future of DEFA. A public debate about the future of DEFA ensued that soon took on the shape of a conflict between East and West Germans: West Germans accused East Germans of resisting modernization while clinging nostalgically to their communist past, while East Germans countered that imperious West German attitudes had interrupted the slower pace of East Germany on its road to democratization, resulting in a forced and hurried unification.

While the technical equipment and the working conditions at the studio were 30 years behind western standards, the studio was nevertheless attractive enough to draw bids from investors who viewed DEFA a lucrative investment. The studio’s appeal – as this chapter will show – was not entirely based on its location, propitious tax status, potential to grow, proximity to Berlin, and magnificent infrastructure, which were all sought-after commodities in East Germany at the time. In addition to the easy access to Germany’s *Autobahn* system and Berlin’s suburban train network, the studio’s history and its significance for German film history played at least an equally important role in the contest between East and West.

Babelsberg as the birthplace of German film was synonymous with a long-lasting, world-class tradition of filmmaking that set standards for the entire film industry. Schlöndorff sought to continue this tradition with his campaign to fashion Studio Babelsberg into the new standard for European filmmaking. Schlöndorff’s approach, in

the terminology of the historian Eric Hobsbawm, attempted to invent a tradition by renaming the studio and instituting a mission statement that reflected the “background, thought and culture” (11) of Babelsberg in its golden years as the UFA studio. As a consequence, DEFA’s 40 years of filmmaking tradition at Babelsberg would have disappeared; in Schlöndorff’s invented tradition for Babelsberg, there was no room for the historical achievements of the former GDR.

DEFA employees had hoped to continue their work as a small, independent studio for East German filmmakers trained by DEFA. Advocates of an independent DEFA studio claimed that the quality of their films, supported by federal and regional investment, would make the Babelsberg studio a financially viable alternative for filmmaking with a distinctive East German touch. After the announcement of Schlöndorff’s plans, the studio had now become what Hobsbawm calls an “emotionally and symbolically charged sign” (11) for many East Germans who perceived the changes to the studio as an attack on their history and collective memories. Reacting to Schlöndorff’s plans to restructure Babelsberg into a European film capitol, East Germans elevated the DEFA studio to a mythical location. The notion of a “Babelsberg Myth,” and the attempt on both sides of the debate to appropriate this myth as the foundation for their respective concepts of tradition at Babelsberg, helps to explain the development and argumentation of the conflict surrounding Babelsberg as a contested site of historical and collective memory.

DEFINITION OF THE “BABELSBERG MYTH”

The Duden. Deutsches Universalwörterbuch A-Z provides two definitions for the term “myth.” In its original meaning, myth is the “Überlieferung, überlieferte Dichtung, Sage, Erzählung o.ä. aus der Vorzeit eines Volkes.“ Hermann Broch has interpreted

myth as the basis of human development, claiming that myth became religion and later the foundation of civilization when it began to guide people's behavior. According to Broch, myth began influencing peoples' lives with the formation of legends (218). This process is responsible for the glorification of a person, thing or event in a society, which coincides with the second Duden definition of the word myth as "Person, Sache, Begebenheit, die (aus meist verschwommenen Vorstellungen heraus) glorifiziert wird, legendären Charakter hat." In his analysis of the myths circulating in the contemporary world, Roland Barthes argues that the myths that surround us in everyday life construct a world for us to live in. They erect a power structure, which we accept as universal truth, regardless of the "objective" reality. As a consequence of this "imagined" truth it becomes increasingly difficult for persons engulfed in myth to perceive reality clearly. Their blurred perception of reality often results in illogical, at times emotional, demonstrations of their allegiance to mythical constructs.

In the "Babelsberg Myth," the film studio acts as an institution that symbolizes German ingenuity, innovation, and worldwide success in film production. These qualities were again associated with Babelsberg in 1992, and much of the conflict between East and West Germans seems to result from different understandings of the "Babelsberg Myth." To many East Germans, the myth included the DEFA years, whereas West Germans generally viewed the Weimar period of the UFA as the last "mythical" time period. As a result, control over the studio was perhaps interpreted as control over the historiography of German film.

THE "BABELSBERG MYTH" OF UFA

UFA quickly became Hollywood's major competitor in Europe. It expanded the studio into a film city along the lines of Hollywood and invested in films that achieved

global success. Friedrich Murnau's Der letzte Mann (1924), as well as Fritz Lang's Die Nibelungen (1924) and Metropolis (1926), are examples of the outstanding filmmaking produced by UFA in the Weimar Republic. During the years of National Socialism, the German color film was introduced, and effects like the ride on the cannon ball in Münchhausen (1943) set new standards for the use of tricks in film. Between 1911 and 1945, the film studio at Babelsberg became the most important filmmaking institution in Germany. The golden era of Babelsberg generated many of the technical innovations that defined German film, including Europe's largest studio, the *Große Halle*, and the *Tonkreuz*, a facility consisting of four sound-proof studios where from 1929 on sound production was radically improved. World famous film stars as Marlene Dietrich, and classic films from the golden era of Babelsberg reflect the importance of the studio for German film.

Babelsberg's value as a mythical place of German filmmaking was also recognized by the allied troops who occupied the area in April 1945. Consolidated and controlled by National Socialists, the studio produced many films for Third Reich audiences. Although Berlin was at the center of Allied air raids, the studio remained largely unscathed by air attacks, and production even continued without film in the cameras in order to save directors and actors from being deployed in the final days of the war (Bock 137). As a recriminatory measure against German filmmaking and as a way to exact reparations, the occupying Red Army ransacked Babelsberg, disassembled technical equipment, and transported cameras, most of the film prints, and other valuables to the Soviet Union.

THE “BABELSBERG MYTH” OF DEFA

This caesura in German filmmaking in 1945 marked the end of the “Babelsberg Myth” for West Germans as the studio underwent a complete transformation. From this point on, the studio belonged to the Soviet Occupied Zone, which later became the German Democratic Republic in 1949, after the three Western occupation zones were united to form the Federal Republic of Germany. The following Cold War between the political systems of East and West was reflected in the cultural politics of both German states and the role Babelsberg played as a film studio for Germans. Babelsberg inevitably grew into the role of national film studio of the GDR, shaping the film history of East Germany, and perpetuating the “Babelsberg Myth” for more than forty years as the *DEFA Studio für Spielfilme*. While the film industry in the Federal Republic was decentralized, DEFA retained its central position within East German film production. Initially, decentralization of the West German film industry was meant to facilitate the post-war reeducation of the German people; later, decentralization helped to prevent a strong national West German film industry, thereby creating a new market for Hollywood films.

In its endeavor to rebuild the film industry, DEFA received support from the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD). General Tulpanov, head of the SMAD, granted a license to the *Filmaktiv*, a group of exiled communist filmmakers from the Weimar Republic, allowing them to operate as *Deutsche Film AG* (DEFA) after May 17th, 1946. Tulpanov eventually granted the *Filmaktiv* permission to use the Babelsberg studio in 1947. In 1948, Babelsberg became the permanent home for the DEFA, and two years later in 1950, the studio was renamed DEFA Studio für Spielfilme (Wilkening).

The *Filmaktiv* selected the name DEFA to appropriate the historical “Babelsberg Myth.” By naming the new company after the successful UFA of the Weimar Republic,

DEFA signaled its intention to continue the filmic legacy of Weimar Cinema. DEFA also sought to construct stylistic continuities with the Weimar past while carefully avoiding the aesthetic traditions of Nazi film. Many of the early DEFA films were produced in black and white, an implicit rejection of the National Socialist color films produced by UFA, and an explicit embrace of the traditions of Weimar Cinema.⁷

At the same time, DEFA confirmed its intention to break with the cinema of illusion that defined the films of both UFA and Hollywood (Dalichow 75). DEFA chose to distance their filmmaking from Western models by producing anti-fascist films that depicted the realities of life in post-war Germany.⁸ During the formalism debate of the 1950s, DEFA was criticized explicitly for retaining too many UFA traditions, thereby perpetuating, at least aesthetically, fascist forms of art. The Socialist Unity Party (SED), the de facto ruling party in the German Democratic Republic and regulatory institution of the arts, demanded an orientation of filmmaking towards Socialist realism. According to the SED's guidelines, films were to reflect the realities of life and promote the creation of socialism (Deutscher Filmverlag 6).

In the years to come, the concept of the "Babelsberg Myth" shifted from the admiration of cinematic masterpieces at the time of the Weimar Republic towards the recognition of films criticizing the political system of the GDR from within. Audiences in the GDR attended DEFA films for three reasons⁹: to participate in social outings

⁷ One could argue that film stock – even black-and-white – was scarce after the war, which forced filmmakers to make use of any available material. However, early films like Georg Klaren's Büchner adaptation Wozzeck (1947) demonstrate filmmaking in the tradition of expressionism (Mückenberger 26). Joshua Feinstein explicitly mentions that "DEFA's initial output was quite diverse and displayed varied lines of continuity with earlier German cinema" (27).

⁸ Feinstein argues that "from the beginning, DEFA defined itself in clear opposition to the UFA tradition" (21). This may be true for the scope of his work, investigating the genres of rubble film and anti-fascist film, but I disagree to a certain extent because this notion does not take into account the DEFA films that echo the traditions of the UFA revue film, such as the circus film 1-2-3 Corona (1949) or the comedy Der Biberpelz (1949).

⁹ I base this claim on the information I received when I interviewed GDR citizens as a part of my field study. More details can be found in chapter 4.

organized by groups from work or school, to seek the solitude and darkness of the movie theater, or to look for hidden criticism in the film.¹⁰ Obviously, the interest in the film was only secondary in the first and second case, but genuine for the third. This part of the audience identified with protagonists and discovered parallels to their own lives, even as they recognized the conflict between the reality of their own lives and the idealistic representation of socialist society in DEFA films. Some of these films looked at taboo topics, such as the fraternization of Germans with the Soviet troops in Karbid und Sauerampfer (1963), or problems in GDR society as in Der geteilte Himmel (1964). Others – for example Der Fall Gleiwitz (1961) or films directed against the Federal Republic such as Die Glatzkopfbande (1963) – repeated the official dogma and made it difficult to locate a critical message about the regime.

At the Eleventh Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee in 1965, the SED sanctioned the ban of the entire year's feature film production and passed a resolution that subjected future DEFA films to intense scrutiny and censorship.¹¹ This development mandated a prolonged approval process for film projects, which made it even more difficult to incorporate critical perspectives in the films. First, dramaturges collected ideas and met with production groups to discuss potential film projects according to guidelines set forth by the Ministry of Culture. These production groups were responsible for a draft of the screenplay and an exact, detailed description of the project (Wolf 265). Then the studio could accept the screenplay and receive permission from the Head Office of the Ministry of Culture to proceed with the production. Finally, the

¹⁰ Jürgen Brettschneider describes the widespread impression of the quality of DEFA films with an anecdote of two lovers assuring each other of their love: "Mit dir würde ich sogar in einen DEFA-Film gehen" (289). A similar scene is known from Spur der Steine.

¹¹ See Günter Agde's volume about this meeting. The most prominent cases were perhaps Das Kaninchen bin ich (1965) and Spur der Steine (1966). For case studies of some of the banned films consult Stefan Soldovieri's dissertation and several articles of Sean Allan and John Sandford's DEFA book.

completed film was once again approved and classified by a secretary of the Head Office Film (Jungnickel 48-56) before it was released.

As a result of these restrictions, film quality suffered, and audiences were increasingly disappointed with new productions. The absence of a critical voice in the films (Dalichow 71), along with a reluctance to adapt the DEFA studio and its mission to a changing time (Schieber 301) contributed to the studio's increasing unpopularity. Aside from the entertaining *Indianerfilme*, which drew large crowds of more than a million, the majority of DEFA films played in near-empty theaters. There were exceptions, including Die Legende von Paul und Paula (1973) and Solo Sunny (1980), but the loss of artistic freedom (Dalichow 74) resulted in the waning popular interest in DEFA films.¹²

THE "BABELSBERG MYTH" OF THE *WENDE*

In the late 1980s, the "Babelsberg Myth" underwent another significant shift. In a period defined by the political and social upheavals accompanying the fall of Berlin Wall, DEFA sought to rescue DEFA Cinema and retain it as representative of East German culture. The potential of the DEFA studio in the late 1980s lay not in the technical equipment, which was decades behind European standards, but instead in the large studio premises in Babelsberg, and the highly specialized employees (Dalichow 329).¹³ The younger generation of DEFA filmmakers acknowledged the studio's problems and demanded changes for the studio: "Die überholte ... Struktur unseres Studios, in der unsere Filme entstehen, muß auf künstlerische und ökonomische Effektivität überprüft

¹² Paul und Paula is still a timeless classic with cult status comparable to the Rocky Horror Picture Show. It runs every Saturday night in Berlin's movie theater "Blow-Out."

¹³ The actor Otto Sander questioned the special qualification of the personnel: "Statt einer Industrie gibt es hier nur Nostalgie. Die DEFA will man erhalten, weil da mal Marlene Dietrich gedreht hat, nicht weil die Ateliers und das Fachpersonal besonders gut sind" (Giesen 317). Schönemann argues exactly the opposite and claims that the only reasons the DEFA survived such a long time despite the catastrophic condition of the studio were the knowledge and improvisational talent of its 2000 employees (72).

und mit dem Ziel aufgebrochen werden, daß wir entscheiden, welche Filme gemacht werden.“ Babelsberg, they proclaimed, could only revive its reputation by detaching art from politics and giving responsibility back to the artist. The fourth generation of DEFA directors took matters into their own hands and made more films than ever before while they were also engaged in the political process of helping the GDR become a democratic country (McGee).

This generation of DEFA directors, however, fell victim to the rapid unification process of the GDR and the FRG. When the last GDR government paved the way for the unification of East and West, it also prepared all state-owned companies for privatization. On June 17, 1990, the government authorized the trust company Treuhand to coordinate the sale of these companies to private investors after unification. The *DEFA Studio für Spielfilme* became the *DEFA-Spielfilm GmbH im Aufbau* and was transferred along with all of its assets to its new owner, the Treuhand (Dalichow 329). Within a year, the studio's personnel was reduced to about 900, half of which were employed at low wages without actual work, the so-called *Kurzarbeit Null*, which reduced the daily work to zero hours. The workers were employed at a minimum wage but did not have any work. They showed up on the employment roll, but were effectively unemployed (Stummer 32). DEFA employees did not offer much resistance against the lay-offs and changes to the studio. In lieu of protest, resignation set in: “Gegen die Massenentlassungen gab es keine Streiks, keine Demonstrationen, keine Bündnisse zu Aktions- und Notgemeinschaften, kaum juristische Gegenmaßnahmen einzelner Beschäftigter. Die Aussonderung wurde als unabwendbares Schicksal hingenommen. Jeder starb für sich allein“ (Dalichow 330).

Regional politicians offered a model to convert the studios to a media center for the state of Brandenburg in which the DEFA studios were to be retained as a location for filmmaking in Germany (Köhler). Potential buyers had to commit to the use of the studio

as a film center and reserve parts of the studio premises for use by Brandenburg's regional public broadcasting station Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg (ORB), and by the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen (HFF) "Konrad Wolf" (Enderlein). Eventually the French company Compagnie Générale des Eaux (CGE) agreed to the conditions and signed the contract with the Treuhand on August 21st, 1992, to take over the DEFA studio for 130 million German marks, less than half of the estimated value of 280 million marks (Dalichow 331). Subsidized by the state Brandenburg and the European Union, CGE began to restructure the studios according to the plans. The new owners sold part of the former studio and reinvested the earnings in the modernization of the studio. In accordance with the proposed model, two thirds of the original film studio Babelsberg was used for the continuation of film production and the construction of a "media city." The difference between the estimated and the actual purchase price was used to keep film production at Babelsberg for at least ten years, and the restructuring efforts of CGE contributed to the continuation of filmmaking at Babelsberg.

After German unification, West Germans revised their myth of Babelsberg as the historic cradle of German cinema. According to the West German perspective, the German national cinema of the Babelsberg era ended with Weimar cinema, and continued with West German cinema after the Second World War. In the West German historiography of film, the DEFA films produced at Babelsberg were, like the films of the Nazi period, propagandistic creations made to deceive and manipulate their audiences. The 40-year history of DEFA was seen as an intermission in the long tradition of superior German filmmaking, despite the fact that many of East Germany's feature films had received international accolades.

The situation was exacerbated when Volker Schlöndorff, West German film director and acting manager of the studio, announced the impending restructuring of the

DEFA Studio. Schlöndorff disclosed in a telephone conversation with me that having kept the name DEFA would have obstructed the development of the studio into a modern European film center. European filmmakers, Schlöndorff claimed, would have only used the studio if it did not contain the “aura of socialism.” He described DEFA films as “mostly boring and uninspiring,” and the personnel at the studio as slow in comparison with Western European standards and unable to adapt to the changing society. Economic and artistic success demanded a radical new beginning as a European studio, which mandated a tabula rasa among the personnel (Schlöndorff 2003).

CONTROLLING THE "BABELSBERG MYTH"

The sale of the DEFA studio was made public simultaneously with the first instances of *Ostalgie* in 1992.¹⁴ Similar to other examples of *Ostalgie*, in which consumer products of the former GDR became symbols of GDR history, the studio was understood to be one of the last existing reminders of this past. Just as consumer products had become sites for the (re)construction of the collective social identity of East Germans, the *DEFA Studio für Spielfilme* was now embraced as the historical location of East German cinema. As an artifact of the GDR and its culture, the integrity of the studio’s historical meaning and significance was threatened by West Germany’s insensitivity to the DEFA’s importance as a cultural institution. Moreover, along with the name DEFA, the historical association of the studio with the GDR in general was

¹⁴ Daphne Berdahl accounts for occurrences of nostalgia for the GDR in her study of the East German village of Kella in the former restricted borderland. The residents return to their familiar previous way of life. If given the choice they prefer to purchase products they know from the GDR. I assume that this village is not an isolated case but rather a model for many areas located in the former GDR. After all, *Ostalgie* in the form I have described was not limited to a small area either. It encompassed the entire republic, but persevered longest in the East.

threatened, when the new manager of the studio, Volker Schlöndorff, wrote in an open letter:

Die Erben der DEFA sind sicher weder die französisch-britischen Investoren, noch bin ich es. Gekauft haben erstere nur den Atelierbetrieb, und nichts anderes versuche ich zu managen. Das geistige Erbe liegt bei Euch, den Berliner und Brandenburger Filmemachern . . . Der Name DEFA . . . gehört wie der Name UFA der Geschichte an . . . Er wird als geschichtlicher Name weiterleben, die Studios aber sollten einfach einen Ortsnamen tragen, nämlich BABELSBERG. Dieser Begriff beinhaltet keine Ideologie. BABELSBERG wird vor allem eine Produktionsstätte sein – offen für Produzenten aus der ganzen Welt. (1993: 299-300)

According to this concept, the studio was to be stripped of its function as location of German filmmaking exclusively. Instead of reviving the “Babelsberg Myth” with a modernized film studio, which would have strengthened the role of German film, East Germans felt that this new global strategy for the studio disadvantaged local and regional filmmakers in need of studio space (Brettschneider; Dalichow; Giesenfeld).

However, filmmakers from former East Germany have worked at the new studio after the sale. The DEFA scholar Massimo Locatelli points out that, while DEFA as film studio may have disappeared, many young former DEFA directors cooperated with Studio Babelsberg in their critical examination of GDR history. Many small, independent production companies, such as Ö-Film, Maxfilm, or Ostfilm, for example, profited from the studios and carried on the “DEFA myth” (114) by continuing the intellectual DEFA legacy. Negative reactions to the transformation of the studio into an international film studio were therefore emotional responses that demonstrate the role of Babelsberg as mythical place with a special meaning for East Germans.

The opponents of the sale understood the DEFA studio as cultural capital that needed to be preserved for the future. But after Schlöndorff announced the end of an era, history seemed to repeat itself for East Germans with the sale of the studio. It was akin to the experience of seeing many of the GDR icons and products disappear almost overnight. The disappearance of these objects meant a loss of symbols associated with GDR culture. In a way comparable to the newly defined roles of some icons of *Ostalgie* as unifying elements of East German culture, the studio was no longer seen as just a place of filmmaking; it had become a visual reminder of the GDR past. The studio was transformed into a vehicle of collective memory for former GDR citizens. As such, the studio represented the cultural tradition of GDR film, devoid of the former negative connotations of DEFA film. East Germans, who formerly viewed DEFA as a producer of films inundated by propaganda and politics now accepted the studio as an East German cultural asset.

BABELSBERG AS LOCATION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

The notion that Babelsberg could play a significant role in the history of the GDR and the future of East Germany led to the creation of a new “Babelsberg Myth.” Babelsberg was the link between the studio’s tradition and its future as a film studio with important implications for East Germany. The studio functioned as an anchor of East German collective memory and offered a shared base for the various personal memories East Germans had about DEFA films. There are three types of personal memories East Germans may have about DEFA films: the memory of the film as medium of DEFA cinema, the memory of historical and/ or socio-cultural events that triggered the film, and

lastly the memory of personal experiences associated with the film.¹⁵ It is obvious that no two personal memories of a film would be identical, since all individuals will have had different experiences in their lives. Nevertheless, resemblances or parallels between personal memories, and even shared memories will be the case in an “affective community” (Halbwachs 1980: 30) with similar interests. In the case of DEFA, Babelsberg was the shared interest of East Germans.

The awareness of East Germans about Babelsberg as an important place in their lives enables the articulation of a collective memory. The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs notes that the collective memory of a group is more than the aggregate of all personal memories of a group. He believes that a collective memory encompasses individual memories while remaining distinct from them (1980: 51). At the same time, collective memory could only exist through the discussion of this memory and the common will to contest the loss of a cultural icon. “Collective memories originate from shared communications about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life worlds of the individuals who partake in the communal life of a group” (Kanter 19). In essence, the definition of an East German “Babelsberg Myth” required East Germans to find out about their bond with the studio. DEFA was still largely unchanged in 1992. It had retained its name and appearance, and the same directors produced films at the old location up to this point. Now that the studio had become the object of desire, it became the focus of East Germans’ collective imagination. Their collective memory had

¹⁵ These three types can of course overlap: for example, someone may remember the banned DEFA film *Spur der Steine* that was censored as a result of the Eleventh Plenary Meeting. This person may have had the chance to see the film during its brief time in the theaters and recall the plot or Manfred Krug as the star. At the same time, this person may remember the discussion about the role of art in socialism, which resulted in the withdrawal of the film. Finally, this person might remember personal experiences that took place at the same time the film came out, e.g. the first love, the first kiss, a fight with the parents about clothing because of the fashion the film promoted.

retained “from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive” (Halbwachs, 1980: 80).

CHANGING THE FACE OF BABELSBERG

Eventually, the Treuhand sold the studio to the CGE, which named it Studio Babelsberg and divided it into the three parts: Babelsberg Motion Pictures, Filmstudio Babelsberg and Filmpark Babelsberg.¹⁶ A large part of the former film studio became the new *Medienzentrum* with office buildings for the East German regional TV station Radio Berlin-Brandenburg (RBB); other parts of the property were leased to high tech companies working in postproduction using new digital technologies. The lack of success in the film business at Babelsberg forced the former CGE – the company had renamed itself Vivendi Universal – to rethink its strategies. They focused on the co-production and support of film projects.¹⁷ In 2001, the studios developed into a service center for television and film production, offering equipment, knowledge, and financial support through funds from the *Filmboard Berlin-Brandenburg* and the European Community (Butzek 2005, 29). Three years later, Vivendi eventually sold Studio Babelsberg Motion Pictures and Studio Babelsberg on September 1, 2004 to two private investors, Carl Woebcken and Christoph Fisser, for the symbolic price of one Euro;

¹⁶ Babelsberg Motion Pictures was first called Babelsberg Film GmbH. The company failed to become a large European film producer. They acted as co-producer until 2002, when the guidelines from 1992 expired, which required Studio Babelsberg to produce films. These guidelines were a requirement instituted by the Treuhand to be considered as a serious candidate for the transaction in 1992 (Giessen 333). Filmstudio Babelsberg provides logistical support for directors and film companies who are interested in filming in the Berlin-Brandenburg area. Filmpark Babelsberg is the new name of the Studiotour. It was renamed in 1993 and became an independent company in 1998. The Filmpark is a small theme park. Some parts of it commemorate the DEFA legacy, an aspect I discuss in the following chapter.

¹⁷ The biggest projects were Sonnenallee (1999), The Pianist (2002), Rosenstraße (2003), Around the World in 80 Days (2004), The Bourne Supremacy (2004), Aeon Flux (2005), and Mission Impossible III (2006).

Woebcken and Fisser had agreed to pay off the studio's debt of approximately 18 million Euros (Butzek 2005: 28).

The new owners of Studio Babelsberg wished to resurrect the "Ghosts of Babelsberg" by emphasizing their intent to continue the production of feature films at the studio. Their vision of the "Babelsberg Myth" called attention to the UFA period at Babelsberg as the most prominent era in the studio's history. The studio's webpage alluded to the period of Weimar cinema and stressed the classic films that had been produced at Babelsberg. Even their logo reflected the focus on the years that were believed to be the most significant contribution to German cinema. The design featured a stylized version of the production of the Maria Doppelgänger robot in Fritz Lang's Metropolis (1927). Thus, the emblem of the new studio symbolized the construction of a "Babelsberg Myth" around the perception that the studio's most significant period took place during the Weimar years.

There is however a second implication to this design. The logo targeted an international audience of producers that were familiar with the classic films of Weimar Cinema, but may have been unaware of Babelsberg as the production site of these films. The logo singles out the UFA as the most important resident of Babelsberg. At the same time it ignores the decades of DEFA filmmaking and the role DEFA films played in an international context. There is no mention of the anti-fascist film defined by DEFA directors in the post-war years, or their attempts to come to terms with Germany's National-Socialist past for the first time in German history. One finds no reference to Babelsberg as the venue of GDR film production, and no indication of DEFA as an important factor in Eastern European cinema. On the other hand, the choice of the robot Maria as a symbol of UFA cinema reiterates the 1992 announcement to sweep the name DEFA, along with its legacy, into the dustbin of history. Reviving the UFA with the

iconography of Metropolis suggests that the indifference towards DEFA cinema continues to this day.

THE "BABELSBERG MYTH" IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The current version of the “Babelsberg Myth” consists of references to the UFA of Weimar cinema, combined with a new string of successes that began with the changes made to Babelsberg after 1992. The past history of Babelsberg as a location for classic films of Weimar cinema helped to attract production companies. They had the opportunity to film in a historic location while they took advantage of the logistical expertise the new Studio Babelsberg had to offer. Post-production, cutting, and digitizing of the material can be performed onsite and saves the expensive cost of transporting the film stock all over Europe.¹⁸ Babelsberg is no longer renowned as location of German film, but has become an international center for services dedicated to TV and film production.

The “Babelsberg Myth” lost its significance for East Germans as DEFA’s legacy is no longer tied to the studio. As the remaining buildings from the DEFA era lost their commemorative status, East German collective memory associated with Babelsberg disappeared, too. The studio buildings took on new roles as functional spaces within Studio Babelsberg, and they no longer remind observers of the previous era of filmmaking, although many still exist in its previous form.¹⁹ Only the Filmpark Babelsberg retains the character of a commemorative space for DEFA film, while the

¹⁸ A high-tech center and the virtual film studio fx.Center set new standards in filmmaking (Krieg 498). These institutions are primarily used for TV productions, but their existence shows that Babelsberg offers a complete package for the film production that is up or even ahead of industry standards.

¹⁹ The *Tonkreuz* for example is still used as a studio. Its façade is unchanged from the DEFA period.

preservation of the DEFA legacy shifted to other institutions that became the successors of DEFA.

CONCLUSION

The end of the DEFA studio necessitated a redefinition of a DEFA tradition. After the failure to invent Babelsberg as the site of such a tradition, more than 40 years of DEFA film became visual artifacts that both represented and, by their very existence, preserved the GDR's cinema tradition. The disappearance of the DEFA studio deprived East Germany of a physical site that could enshrine its filmic tradition; therefore, DEFA films became vehicles for the transmission and conservation of this tradition.

The conflict over the ownership of DEFA may be interpreted as one example of a broader trend in the first years after unification, when East and West Germans seemed to be incompatible and incapable of true national reunification. West Germans saw themselves as the "winners" of history: they continued their way of life without significant changes after unification, whereas East Germans were required to give up their old lives and learn the rules of West German society. In the eyes of many West Germans, GDR history did not make significant contributions to German history; thus, West Germans believed they had the right to dictate the terms of unification. The events surrounding Babelsberg provide an illustration of how West Germans attempted to impose their cultural models, their historiography, and their traditions on East Germans. Therefore, East Germans, as the "losers" of unification, reacted by viewing their past through the rosy hues of nostalgia, remembering when life was easier because it was played by familiar rules.

Some interpreted the failure to invent Babelsberg as an East German tradition as evidence that it was not possible to work against the new system. In order to accomplish

goals, one had to appeal to West German cultural norms in order to explain why it was necessary to retain a plurality of German traditions. After the economic reconstitution of the East during the first years after unification, the creation of new political and economic models to preserve East German traditions became more important. In the East, it seemed urgent to resuscitate old GDR traditions, or invent such traditions, to serve the demands of those who insisted on some measure of comforting familiarity in their cultural life. Eventually, the invention or revival of certain cultural traditions turned out to benefit all parties: East Germans embraced the sense of continuity and identity provided by these traditions, and they were able to take advantage of an improved quality of life.

DEFA films are a prime example for this development. When DEFA was gone from the market, the films became its legacy, but were left without an agent charged with the task of establishing the films in the new society. Public demand among East Germans for DEFA films indicated a strong interest in the films as well as the potential for an emerging new market, which made finding a champion for the films, preserving them, and creating a DEFA tradition, an urgent priority.

Chapter 2

Preserving a Legacy: DEFA's Successors in the Federal Republic

DEFA's end as a film studio put the future of its films in doubt. More than 750 films produced between the years 1946 and 1992 were not included in the sale agreement with CGE and became the property of their directors. Suddenly, the filmmakers were faced with the unique and difficult task of marketing their films individually, and many directors voiced their concern about the uncertain future of their films. They believed that the films embodied the legacy of the DEFA and feared that this period of German film history would be forgotten, possibly resulting in the gradual disappearance of the cultural memory of the DEFA as an East German film studio (Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek). To preserve this memory for the future and ensure the continuity of DEFA films in the Federal Republic, the filmmakers expressed their desire to create an independent institution, a successor to the DEFA studio that would be responsible for the future preservation and marketing of the films.

This moment of uncertainty marked the beginning of DEFA's "afterlife." Recognizing the need for an agent to coordinate all of the endeavors associated with the preservation and distribution of DEFA film, plans for a DEFA-Stiftung were soon underway. The creation of the DEFA-Stiftung, in its own words founded for the "defence (sic) and revival of traditions," ensured that DEFA films would become a successful enterprise, soon generating enough revenue to allow the DEFA-Stiftung to institute a generous grant system, which now subsidizes DEFA film screenings and provides stipends to DEFA scholars and filmmakers.

This chapter explores the invention of a DEFA film tradition independent of the DEFA film studio, tracing the development of six institutions that act as successors to DEFA that are in themselves invented DEFA traditions. In addition to the DEFA-Stiftung, representations of this invented DEFA tradition are found in the Filmpark Babelsberg's studio tour, which includes exhibits and scenery taken from DEFA films. The Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv's GDR film collection, as well as the permanent DEFA exhibit at the Filmmuseum Potsdam, also indicate the breadth and extent of preservation efforts. The film distribution company Progress Filmverleih and the film production company Icestorm Entertainment are also two important organizations that have enabled the continuing success of DEFA films.

Furthermore, this chapter will critically examine how the twin pillars of inventing a DEFA tradition – the preservation of cultural memory and the aggressive marketing of the films – were combined to build this non-existent tradition from the ground up. While the promise to preserve DEFA films as artifacts of cultural memory was an important factor in the acquisition of 12.6 million German marks of federal start-up capital, as well as office space at Burgstraße 7 in Berlin-Mitte, the DEFA-Stiftung's goal from the beginning was the successful integration of DEFA films in the film market of the Federal Republic of Germany.

PRESERVING CULTURAL MEMORY

The archivist Anne Kenney has defined preservation as “all activities associated with maintaining materials in their original form or some other format” (185). In other words, preservation aims to retain an object and makes every effort to keep it accessible for “as long as possible” (Eaton 41). The term preservation applies to a wide range of historical media artifacts, including documents as well as “photographic [records], sound

recordings [and] motion pictures” (42).²⁰ I use the term in a broader sense to describe the physical activities undertaken for preservation and the implications that may result from those activities. Preservation of DEFA films is therefore more than just the act of maintaining the actual film prints and making them available for use. It also shows the effects that preservation endeavors have on German society.

In the case of DEFA films, the requirement to preserve the films resulted from the sale of the DEFA and the disappearance of the studio. The DEFA ceased to produce films under its established name, while the DEFA studio changed its face to become a modern media city with little resemblance to the old complex. Without the studio as commemorative location, the films took over the studio’s role as the center of mythical attention. They were objects of the East German past and part of a legacy that needed to be preserved for posterity. Following Jan Assmann’s theory of objectified culture as instances of cultural memory, I propose that all preservation efforts undertaken turned DEFA films into elements of cultural memory.

Assmann has argued that cultural memory “comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self image” (125). Applying Assmann’s argument to the preservation of DEFA film, it is precisely this act of preservation that helps keep the legacy of the DEFA alive and establishes the films as components of an East German cultural memory. The preservation of the films, which was one of the requirements for the successful creation of a DEFA tradition, had become necessary in order to replace the defunct studio that had previously served as the monument of this memory.²¹ The historian Wulf Kansteiner states that cultural memory “consists of objectified culture –

²⁰ Eaton refers to the actual biological and chemical treatments as “conservation” (41).

²¹ Here I refer to the changes in the “Babelsberg Myth” I discussed in chapter 1.

that is, the texts, rites, images, buildings and monuments that are designed to recall fateful events in the history of the collective” (13-4). When the studio disappeared from objectified DEFA culture, it was unable to continue fulfilling its role as a monument of the DEFA, and lost its meaning as the “officially sanctioned heritage of a society” (14). The only objects left to commemorate the DEFA were the actual films. Their “cultivation,” or preservation, became a compensatory strategy for East Germans to keep their cultural memory alive.

According to Assmann’s theory, there are two modes for the preservation of cultural memory: one of potentiality and another of actuality. Both modes reflect how representations of the past, such as books, films, and documents, function as reminders of a bygone culture in different ways. The mode of potentiality is used to explain the history of those representations, showing how they operated in a culture that has come to an end. This mode is not concerned with implications of the representations for the present, regardless of whether the objects continue to be present in a society. The mode of potentiality occurs when “representations of the past are stored in archives, libraries, and museums” (Kansteiner 14). In terms of the preservation of DEFA films, the mode of potentiality suggests that the films are stored as representations of a GDR past, an observation well within the confines of much of the extant scholarship on the DEFA. In contrast to the mode of potentiality, representations of the past “occur in the mode of actuality when these representations are adopted and given new meaning in fresh social and historical contexts” (Kansteiner 14). Representations in the mode of actuality transgress traditional cultural borders as they are redefined outside their original context. In other words, the original contours of representation that belong to a certain historical period or society disappear to make way for the refashioning of representation in a different environment. The mode of actuality provides a more precise analytical

framework that defines the afterlife of DEFA films in the Federal Republic. DEFA films had been part of contemporaneous culture until 1992, but had to undergo a transformation and be presented in the mode of actuality to become elements of cultural memory in the new environment of the Federal Republic.²² The creation of the DEFA-Stiftung, which required the clarification of legal matters about the films, such as the rights to national and international distribution, sales and rentals, was the first step in a process of transformation that was eventually completed with the outsourcing of responsibilities to other institutions. The efforts of all of these institutions to preserve DEFA films guaranteed the successful transformation of the films into realizations of cultural memory.

THE DEFA-STIFTUNG

Since 1999, the DEFA-Stiftung has functioned as the official entity for the preservation of DEFA films. It is the legal successor to the DEFA and owns the rights to all DEFA films produced at the *DEFA Studio für Spielfilme* between 1946 and 1990.²³ The film scholar Bärbel Dalichow has characterized the DEFA-Stiftung as “die idealistische Idee eines Schutzraumes für alle DEFA Produkte” (341). According to its by-laws, the DEFA-Stiftung defines its goals as “die Förderung von Kunst und Kultur, nämlich die Nutzbarmachung, Erhaltung und Pflege des ihr übertragenen DEFA-Filmstocks als Bestandteil des nationalen Kulturerbes und die Förderung der deutschen

²² DEFA films are by no means only retained in Germany. The best example is the DEFA Film Library at the University of Massachusetts/ Amherst. My investigation is however restricted to the state of the films in the Federal Republic for two reasons. First, the idea behind preserving films abroad has different implications than it does for Germans. West German lack of interest in DEFA films mirrors an overall disinterest in the history and culture of East Germany. Second, with the exception of Icestorm, none of the institutions preserving DEFA films in Germany is active abroad.

²³ The films between 1990 and 1992 are a special case. As I pointed out in chapter 1 the DEFA was privatized in 1990. Legally, the company was a different entity from that point on. Its remaining films were co-produced with other major studios.

Filmkultur und Filmkunst, einschließlich der Vergabe von Mitteln für diesen Zweck“ (Klaue 308). Thus, the DEFA-Stiftung is the immediate successor of the DEFA and in charge of preservation and active promotion of the DEFA legacy.

The idea of a DEFA film trust was first discussed by artists and studio heads in 1990 before unification, when the DEFA export branch DEFA-Außenhandel sold 250 films to a West German film distributor. According to Dalichow, DEFA artists protested at the Berlinale film festival “vor dem Stand des DEFA-Außenhandels gegen die unkontrollierte Verschleuderung ihrer Werke“ (339-41). Eventually, the contract with the distributor was cancelled by the GDR ministry of culture, and plans were drafted to create a DEFA-Stiftung in charge of the rights to DEFA films.

Initially, legal problems prevented the formation of the DEFA-Stiftung. On 13 September 1990, the GDR parliament *Volkskammer* ratified a bill about the creation of *DDR-Stiftungen* – GDR foundations – to preserve the cultural legacy of the GDR. However, the DEFA-Stiftung had been established on 12 September 1990, one day before foundations of this type were officially acknowledged in the GDR. The *Dokumentarfilmstudio Berlin* successfully contested the legal status of the DEFA-Stiftung in a move intended to allow them to market their films independently, resulting in the removal of the DEFA-Stiftung from the GDR register. All DEFA films remained with the *Treuhand*-managed film distributor Progress and the DEFA-Außenhandel. The sale of Progress proceeded very slowly, coupled with the ambiguity regarding the rights to the DEFA films, delayed new attempts to form the DEFA-Stiftung by eight years, until December 1998. After the rights to the films were cleared, the second DEFA-Stiftung was founded: “Diese ‘Rechtekette’ mußte hergestellt werden, um die Stiftung zweifelsfrei mit allen Rechten auszustatten, die für die uneingeschränkte Verwertung des DEFA Filmstocks notwendig sind“ (Klaue 308).

The new DEFA-Stiftung coordinates all activities concerning DEFA films. It is the legal successor to the DEFA and holds the rights to almost 800 films. The DEFA-Stiftung has taken over all of the DEFA's prior responsibilities, including the replacement of old film prints, distribution to movie theaters and preparation of releases for the home video market. It also promotes the films and manages their distribution, works on public relation campaigns, supports DEFA scholarship with grants, finances exhibits, film series and new film projects about the DEFA, and assists East German filmmakers with the initiation or continuation of their careers. With only two full-time employees, most of the actual preservation work is delegated to three institutions: Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Progress Filmverleih, and Icestorm Entertainment.

The DEFA-Stiftung plays four major roles in the preservation of the DEFA legacy. First, its role as successor of the DEFA confirms the significance of the films in the Federal Republic. Especially after the sale of the DEFA, the presence of the DEFA-Stiftung shows that the historic past of the DEFA was not lost with the studio; this past continues with the presence of the films in the Federal Republic. DEFA films are the vehicles that carry on the legacy of the DEFA and East German film. Even in its logo, the DEFA-Stiftung asserts its role as the bridge between the past and future of DEFA films. The new logo displays the familiar black-and-white letters DEFA, embedded in a black-and-white film stripe using inverted colors to emphasize the lettering. Underneath the old DEFA logo, the word *Stiftung* in gray capital letters is framed by red squares on top and bottom. The combination of the old DEFA logo with the word *Stiftung* draws a clear connection between the new institution and the old DEFA company. At the same time, the addition of the red squares, which augment the black-and-white film stripe, constitute a modern symbol that reflects the commitment of the DEFA-Stiftung to adapt

the DEFA legacy for the new cultural environment while also preserving the tradition of DEFA films.

The DEFA-Stiftung's second role in the preservation of the DEFA legacy is its function as an institution supporting East German film. It provides grants to enable former DEFA directors and young filmmakers to make films with East German topics in the tradition of DEFA film. One example of such a project is Andreas Dresen's character study, Halbe Treppe (2002), about the everyday lives of four East Germans in Frankfurt an der Oder. Through its financial support, the DEFA-Stiftung promotes the regional character of film, thereby continuing the work of the former DEFA studio as a film company. These grants are quite significant for the perpetuation of East German film culture, since they support the production of films that find very little or no funding from institutions outside the region. Directors are encouraged to look at social tendencies that are specific to East Germany or relate to the GDR past. These projects are usually well received by East Germans who welcome the engagement of the directors with current problems in East Germany.²⁴

The third role of the DEFA-Stiftung is directly related to the funding of film projects that deal specifically with East German topics. The DEFA-Stiftung has evolved into the voice of East German and DEFA film in the Federal Republic. This role has evolved not only because of the Stiftung's immediate presence and work in the promotion of DEFA films, but also because of the Stiftung's substantial financial support of these film projects. The support of these new films has created a strong presence of East German film in the overall film production of the Federal Republic. At the same time, East German films emphasize the region's unique history while referring back to

²⁴ See also chapter 4. Some East Germans I interviewed mentioned films by the last generation of DEFA directors and by young East German filmmakers. They claimed to see the traditions of DEFA cinema in these films.

the traditions of DEFA film. Positioned as genre models for the new East German film, DEFA films have been rediscovered as important milestones of German cinema. As a consequence, the DEFA-Stiftung promotes the integration of DEFA film in a canon of German film. The promotion of DEFA films focuses on their unique character, both as documents of a different time and as testimonies of an often-ignored second part of German history.

Lastly, the DEFA-Stiftung engages in the preservation of the DEFA legacy through its support of scholarly projects. It provides grants to scholars of all levels who analyze the history of DEFA cinema and intend to reach a wide audience with their results. The DEFA-Stiftung supports dissertations and research for book and film projects which render DEFA history more accessible. National and international projects on the DEFA are published with the Stiftung's help, and many of these projects have sparked interest in a large international audience. DEFA cinema is now viewed in the larger context of national cinemas and has become part of a global tendency to explore films that differ from the conventions of Hollywood cinema.²⁵

Since the inauguration of the DEFA-Stiftung in 1998, the popularity of DEFA films has grown, and public screenings of DEFA films have become more frequent. The DEFA-Stiftung has managed to conduct its activities in the Federal Republic without compromising the DEFA legacy. To this end, the DEFA-Stiftung reached out to other institutions and accomplished its aim of preserving the entire corpus of DEFA films for posterity.

²⁵ In 2005, a selection of DEFA films was featured in a retrospective at the MoMa. Many DEFA films have also been successfully released on DVD in the US. The "DEFA SciFi Collection" for example features the DEFA space adventures in the style of the original Star Trek series of the 1960s.

THE BUNDESARCHIV-FILMARCHIV

One of the institutions involved in the preservation of DEFA films is the federal Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv in Berlin. The Bundesarchiv is a federal institution, founded originally in 1919 to archive official German documents since 1815. In its current form, the Bundesarchiv has existed since 1952. Its holdings are located in eleven different locations throughout the Federal Republic. As a unit of the Bundesarchiv, the Filmarchiv preserves the filmic legacy of the Federal Republic of Germany. The Filmarchiv stores the original film prints of DEFA films in its facility, grants access to the films, and creates master copies for further duplication and distribution. In its charter, the archive describes its mission as the conservation of German film and the provision of these films to the public: “Aufgabe des Filmarchivs ist die möglichst vollständige archivische Sicherung der deutschen Filmproduktion, unabhängig davon, ob ein Film bei einem privaten Produzenten oder in einer Institution entstanden ist“ (“Aufgaben“). After unification, the collection housed at the Staatliche Filmarchiv der DDR was integrated into the holdings of the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv: “Das Filmarchiv ist eine Abteilung des Bundesarchivs, der seit dem 3. Oktober 1990 das Staatliche Filmarchiv der DDR eingegliedert ist. Damit ist es eines der größten Filmarchive der Welt und das zentrale deutsche Filmarchiv.“ Contrary to other parts of the Bundesarchiv, which were created or expanded to store documents from the GDR separately, only one archive houses all German films.²⁶

In close cooperation with the DEFA-Stiftung, the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv does more than simply preserve the physical material of DEFA films; it also maintains the complete legacy of a period in German filmmaking. In contrast to other periods of

²⁶ The units GDR (Abteilung DDR) and the SAMPO (Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv) are entities within the archive that deal specifically with the GDR heritage.

German film, copies of and unfinished material from all DEFA films are housed in one location at the archive, affording a thorough overview on film in the GDR. More recently, the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv supported the DEFA-Stiftung in its endeavor to restore the formerly censored DEFA film, Die Schönste. In this particular case, the imperatives of preservation, not entertainment, are at the foreground of the work: “Der cineastische, historische Wert hatte mehr Gewicht als die künstlerische Potenz von Die Schönste” (Klaue “Jahr” 307).

The Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv has gone even further in its endeavors to keep history alive for future generations. It has granted access to, and promotes, unknown DEFA films in cooperation with the private research center for unknown German film, Cinegraph Babelsberg; a non-profit organization, Freunde der deutschen Kinemathek, in charge of the Berlin movie theater *Arsenal*; and the *Zeughaus Kino* in the *Deutsches Historisches Museum*. Special screenings at the above locations, such as the film series “1945 – Arena der Erinnerungen” in October 2004, illustrate the significance of DEFA films in Germany. The webpage of the Zeughaus Kino states that “Film hat diese Geschichtsbilder vermutlich wirkungsvoller als andere Medien geprägt. Nicht nur im Prozess der Verklärung der eigenen Geschichte, auch in der Revision dieser Bilder spielte er eine entscheidende Rolle“ (“Arena der Erinnerungen”).

The archive therefore actively preserves DEFA films by integrating them into cultural life. By serving as a storage facility for film prints, the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv is an institution that assists the DEFA-Stiftung with the preservation of DEFA films and their integration into German film history as part of Germany’s cultural heritage.

PROGRESS-FILMVERLEIH

The primary function of a film distributor is to make films available for screenings at movie theaters, duplicating film prints from the original that are then loaned to theaters for a fee. In the GDR, the centralization of the film industry created one distribution company, the Progress Filmverleih, which today continues to distribute DEFA films. After Progress was privatized, the DEFA-Stiftung decided to continue working with Progress and make them the official distributor of DEFA films worldwide. This decision was not surprising if one takes into account the historical bond between the DEFA and Progress, along with the distributor's expertise in DEFA films and the commitment to establish these films in the Federal Republic. All of these aspects contributed to the increasing success of DEFA films.

The Progress-Film-Vertrieb GmbH was created through the fusion of the GDR company Zentrag with the Soviet *Sovexport* on July 11, 1950. Before this date, film distribution in East Germany and the GDR was completely in the hands of the Soviet Union. In 1946, *Sovexport* had taken over the distribution in East Germany to 're-educate' the German population with political film imports from the Soviet Union. Anti-fascist films, such as Wolfgang Staudte's Die Mörder sind unter uns, complemented the film fare from the Soviet Union. *Sovexport* also held the rights to films from the Soviet Union, the *Deutsches Reich*, and later the Federal Republic of Germany. Progress changed its structure to become the citizen-owned company VEB Progress-Film-Vertrieb in 1955; once the company's reorganization was complete and deemed compatible with the business models of the Soviet Union, *Sovexport* handed over the entire film distribution in the GDR to Progress (Wilkening, Betriebsgeschichte 2).

From the beginning, Progress had to juggle its task as distributor of DEFA films and imported films. Progress organized the import of films from socialist countries and

the West. It was easier to import critical films from the West, but entertainment films had to be included in order to draw the public to the cinema. West German film critic Heinz Kersten commented on *Progress*'s dilemma in trying to find the right proportion of efficiency and political mission: "Auf der einen Seite muß er seinen Finanzplan erfüllen; dies ist nur mit Hilfe von westlichen Filmen möglich, die den kulturpolitischen Forderungen des Regimes an die Filmkunst meist nicht entsprechen... Auf der anderen Seite hat er kulturpolitische Aufgaben zu erfüllen, indem er mit Vorzug 'fortschrittliche' Filme einsetzt; diese locken aber vielfach nur wenige Besucher" (Kersten, Filmwesen 267).

The sale of the DEFA in 1992 affected Progress as well. A consensus among the Treuhand²⁷ to preserve the DEFA film stock as a whole necessitated the division of the former DEFA into the DEFA-Stiftung, as curator of the DEFA films, and Progress, as an independent, privately owned company with an exclusive mandate to ensure the publication of DEFA films. Progress was sold in 1997 to a consortium of three firms: DREFA Media, a daughter of the German public television station MDR (Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk),²⁸ Kinowelt Medien AG, and the Tellux film company. Tellux bought its two partners out of the contract on 1 January 2001. Under Tellux's management, Progress has focused predominantly on the distribution of DEFA films and the release of new films with similar topics: "[Tellux] richtete Progress in seinen Vermarktungsebenen schwerpunktmäßig darauf aus, DEFA-Filme zu lizenzieren, zu publizieren und als Ergänzung ausgewählte, zum Repertoire passende Premierenfilme zu starten" (Haase 310).

²⁷ By the time *Progress* was sold, the Treuhand had been renamed *Bundesanstalt für vereinigungsbedingte Sonderaufgaben*. Its mission remained to privatize and sell all former people-owned companies.

²⁸ See chapter 4 for more information on the DEFA and German TV after unification.

Progress therefore continued the work of its GDR predecessor with DEFA films. Film scholar Volker Baer summarizes the new role of the distributor and its value for the future of DEFA films:

Voraussetzung für die Entwicklung [der DEFA-Stiftung] war jedoch die nun erfolgte Privatisierung des Progress Film-Verleihs. ...Jetzt steht die gesamte Produktion der DEFA nicht nur der archivarischen (wissenschaftlichen) Nutzung im Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, sondern auch der kommerziellen Auswertung voll zur Verfügung. So kann sich jeder weiterhin über die Höhen und Tiefen der DEFA ein eigenes Bild machen. Und das wirkt auch einer Legendenbildung entgegen. (42)

Baer describes the work of Progress as a service for the general public. His argument is supported by the ever-more frequent screenings of DEFA films in the Federal Republic after the sale of Progress. The nostalgic glorification of DEFA films was prevented by the commitment of the company to launch new films that complement the topics of DEFA films.

Progress's primary purpose was to market the DEFA films and work with the DEFA legacy (Richter 59). Progress received the exclusive worldwide distribution rights to DEFA films for 15 years after its privatization, thereby assuring the distribution company's integration into the Federal Republic. This long-term contract benefited the DEFA-Stiftung and Progress: "Ziel bei der Arbeit mit diesen Filmen ist es, das kulturelle Erbe der DEFA-Produktionen zu bewahren, dieses Erbe zu veröffentlichen und einen wirtschaftlichen Nutzen daraus zu ziehen, auch um die finanzielle Sicherheit der Stiftung zu stärken" (Haase 310). From 1998 to 2001, Progress paid more than 5 million Deutsche Mark to the DEFA-Stiftung and guaranteed the financial means for the work of the DEFA-Stiftung.

Since 2001, Progress has worked in three areas to promote the DEFA legacy. Progress distributes DEFA film in both national and international markets. Progress has benefited financially from the growing interest in DEFA films, especially within the USA

and Western Europe. Progress complements its distribution operations with the marketing provided by its photo and film clip service, the *Ausschnittdienst*, which provides film stills and clips to newspapers, magazines, journals, film studios and production companies. Progress reinvests its profits in activities related to the restoration of DEFA film prints (Richter 60).

Progress has ensured that DEFA films have become part of the cultural landscape of Germany. The company distributes DEFA films to several different markets within Germany, from large American-style theater chains to small, independent art house cinemas. Progress has also developed and implemented a program to assist smaller movie theaters by providing films at reduced rates. By distributing the films to such a variety of audiences, Progress also ensures the preservation of DEFA films. It continues to present the films to German audiences, creating opportunities for the (re)discovery of DEFA films with each successive release. Progress has also entered the television market with its sponsorship of the successful television series, *Film und Gespräch*. The program combines film screenings with roundtable discussions between directors, actors and experts. Progress has also leveraged its 50 years of experience with DEFA films in two ways: first, to select those DEFA films best suited for contemporary audiences, and second, to market these films to new target audiences. Progress's financial success provides financial support to the DEFA-Stiftung, enables the continuous expansion of the DEFA-Stiftung's activities, and furthers the preservation of the DEFA legacy.

ICESTORM ENTERTAINMENT

While Progress distributed DEFA films to movie theaters, there was the new challenge of reaching out to audiences in the home video market. DEFA films had practically disappeared in the East, since movie theaters had been closed or were showing

other films, and in the television market, East German TV stations were replaced with new regional stations.²⁹ The release of DEFA films on videocassette and later DVD was a new way to tap the potential of this market. The entrepreneur Gerhard Sieber founded a new company, Icestorm Entertainment, to distribute DEFA films in the home video market.

Sieber, who had worked for the Bavaria studios as head of its video division EuroVideo, prepared prints of the DEFA film “Der kleine Muck” to be sold on video immediately after the *Wende*.³⁰ At this time, the small number of DEFA fairytales that were available on the market became popular with East German audiences: “Die Märchen aus den Babelsberger Filmstudios wurden aber besonders in den neuen Bundesländern geliebt, da man sie nun endlich auch zu Hause mit den neuen Video-Recordern abspielen konnte, so oft man wollte“ (Miesen 316). When the video rights to the DEFA films were granted to the DEFA-Stiftung and Progress after unification (Bornemann), the two institutions contacted Sieber about his interest in the exclusive production of DEFA home videos. Sieber realized the chances that resulted from the new distribution situation and founded the company Icestorm Entertainment in 1997: “Die Verwertungsrechte an den Filmen waren noch zu vergeben. Das war wie schwarzes Gold” (Schweer).³¹

During its first year of operations in 1998, Icestorm released 82 of the most popular DEFA films. It established itself on the home video market by pricing its products below the retail standard for video cassettes and DVDs. Icestorm’s pricing was tailored to East German customers, whose average income was below West German

²⁹ See chapter 3.

³⁰ At this time, it was legal in the Federal Republic to release GDR films that had been acquired from the *DEFA-Außenhandel*. Most of the films were the popular DEFA fairytales.

³¹ Although the DEFA-Stiftung was not to be founded until later, it had already been granted the video rights to the films because of its status as legal successor to the DEFA (Bornemann).

standards. Icestorm combined low-price entertainment with a marketing strategy that presented the films as a cultural legacy. Icestorm's marketing of the films was meant to appeal both to East Germans and a narrow circle of film enthusiasts familiar with the films. Brigitte Miesen, head of the marketing and sales department of Icestorm, explains the strategy behind the gradual release of DEFA films: "Icestorm verfolgt das Ziel, nicht nur Segmente aus dem Filmstock herauszubereichen, die man heute unter dem landläufigen Begriff 'Family Entertainment' zusammenfaßt, sondern sieht seine Aufgabe auch darin, die vielen Facetten dieses umfassenden Archivs aufzuspüren und dem interessierten Publikum zugänglich zu machen" (317).

Icestorm used feedback provided by East Germans to determine which films might have the best chance for success on the home video market. Many East Germans contacted Progress with requests for DEFA films, which had become a rarity after the *Wende*. "Zum einen stapelten sich bei der 'Progress' Aktenordner mit Anfragen von Leuten aus der DDR, die endlich mal wieder die alten Filme sehen wollten. Zum anderen wollten wir das westdeutsche Publikum mit den Filmen bekannt machen und begannen daher, ganze Reihen herauszugeben" (Schweer). Releasing 25 popular fairytales and twelve *Indianerfilme* within its first year, Icestorm quickly became a highly successful business venture.

What followed was the period of expansion for the company. Icestorm widened its audience by marketing a very diverse array of films. After the success of the popular DEFA films, Icestorm even released old propaganda films from the GDR:

Als dann der Wunsch nach dem Film-Epos ... Ernst Thälmann – Sohn seiner Klasse und Ernst Thälmann – Führer seiner Klasse von Seiten Icestorm an Progress und die zwischenzeitlich konstituierte DEFA-Stiftung herangetragen wurde, stand die Frage im Raum: 'Wer möchte diese Filme eigentlich sehen?' Es gibt nicht die breite Zahl von Zuschauern, die an diesem Genre so interessiert ist, wie an den populären Märchen- und Indianerfilmen. (Miesen 317)

The production and sale of Kurt Maetzig's Ernst Thälmann – Sohn seiner Klasse (1954), and the sequel, Ernst Thälmann – Führer seiner Klasse (1955), was only possible because DEFA films had been accepted as part of East German history and were released in juxtaposition with the banned films of 1965. Many of these censored films were screened publicly for the first time in 1990. The series title, "banned and censored films from the GDR," titillated audiences in East and West. It sparked interest in the cultural realities of GDR everyday life among West Germans. Former GDR citizens, however, wanted to see the films to find out why they had been censored in 1965: "Jeder zeigt ein Stück DDR-Geschichte, ist mit bestimmten Schicksalen verknüpft, spiegelt soziale und politische Entwicklungen" (Schweer). Many viewers identified with the protagonists of such films as Kurt Maetzig's Das Kaninchen bin ich (1965), a film about a woman who is torn between her love for her brother and her love for the judge responsible for his prison term, or Hermann Zschoche's film Karla (1965), a film about an idealistic young teacher who encourages open discussion about taboo topics in her classroom and is disciplined by her superiors.

Icestorm's responded to customer requests for specific films, which led the company to produce and market a wide range of DEFA films, even after the best-known DEFA films had already been out on the market: "Wichtig war ... auch, das Ohr dort zu haben, wo die Filme ge- und verkauft werden: das permanente Gespräch mit dem Handel und den Käufern, die Wünsche: 'Wann kommt denn endlich Paul und Paula?' – 'Haben Sie auch vor, Literaturverfilmungen auf Video herauszubringen?' – 'Wie sieht es mit Musikfilmen wie Heißer Sommer und Revue um Mitternacht aus?'" (Miesen 317). More recently, Icestorm has released films depicting everyday life in the GDR (*Alltagsgeschichte*).

Icestorm's business practices combined commercial success with their aspiration to keep the DEFA heritage alive. With the introduction of the DVD as a new medium for the home video market, DEFA films that had initially been released on VHS were launched again with extras such as commentary, deleted scenes, interviews and much more. Since then, West German interest has grown to an unexpected level: "War noch zu Beginn der DEFA-Verwertung 1998 auf Video eine Gewichtung bei den bekannten Märchen und Indianern von 70 Prozent Ost- und 30 Prozent West-, bei Spielfilmen 90 Prozent Ost- und 10 Prozent Westverkäufe festzustellen, hat die Einführung des neuen Trägermediums fast ein 'Gleichgewicht' geschaffen" (Miesen 318).

Icestorm fulfilled the premise of the DEFA-Stiftung to preserve DEFA films and to make them accessible to audiences via the home video market. Video cassettes and DVDs helped to integrate DEFA films as elements of a German film culture into contemporary German culture. Many films functioned as vehicles of GDR everyday history that represented GDR culture, both to younger generations and to interested West Germans.

FILMPARK BABELSBERG

In contrast to the aforementioned institutions active in the preservation of the DEFA legacy, the Filmpark Babelsberg features few reminders of this past. The division of the former studio into three independent parts included the dismantling and removal of the DEFA logos from the buildings and offices at the former DEFA studio, suggesting a radical break with the past, a measure necessary for the efficient restructuring of the studio into a center for European film (Schlöndorff). The theme park Filmpark Babelsberg is one of the offshoots of the DEFA studio. With both adventure rides and

exhibits, the park is meant to entertain and educate visitors about the history of German film.

There are few visual reminders of the DEFA present at the Filmpark Babelsberg. The restructuring efforts of the CGE in 1992 succeeded in erasing DEFA mementos from the premises. Although the DEFA is not entirely absent from the park, the DEFA's role in German film history is only apparent to visitors who are familiar with the DEFA's history. Visitors aware of the DEFA past consider the theme park as part of the DEFA legacy; all other visitors have to rely on the way DEFA is represented in the park.

Some have suggested that the remnants of the DEFA at the park are a collection of misrepresentations. The DEFA scholar Barton Byg argued that the studio tour, a guided tour of the film studio and the Filmpark Babelsberg, simply ignored DEFA history and its significance for German cinema:

Es wird in dem Film auch mit wenigen, merkwürdigen Worten mit der DDR und der DEFA umgegangen. Die Narration von Volker Schlöndorff sagt einfach, daß der eiserne Vorhang 'jedwede Kommunikation zwischen Ost und West beendete.' Es bedarf keiner Interpretationskunst, um festzustellen, daß dieser Satz den Tatsachen nicht entspricht und nicht entsprechen will. Er soll nur dazu dienen, ein Schweigen über die eigene – nun gesamtdeutsche – Filmgeschichte zu rechtfertigen. (39)

Because of the absence of direct DEFA mementos in the theme park, it is an intricate task for visitors without knowledge of Filmpark Babelsberg's previous history to understand concealed references to the DEFA period. The DEFA appears to be a marginal footnote in an official studio history that continues to be dominated by the UFA and its famous Weimar cinema productions.

DEFA films are mentioned in the theme park in such a way that they are associated with a film genre rather than with the DEFA. Kurt Maetzig's space adventure Der schweigende Stern (1959), which was a huge success in the US, is commemorated with a lone original poster advertising the film's original release. The poster is part of a

large exhibit about science-fiction film. The exhibit hall is dominated by huge futuristic space vehicles and alien creatures that have no direct connection to the studio. Rather than looking at the achievements of the film studio in the genre of sci-fi throughout the decades, this exhibit strives to entertain visitors with a display of objects from international sci-fi film. There is no mention of DEFA's pioneering sci-fi films of the 1950s and 1960s, which positions the poster of Maetzig's film as evidence of a feeble attempt of GDR cinema to make space films.³²

Another example of a concealed reference to the DEFA is the use of the black-and-white DEFA logo on the side of a trolley car in the theme park. These cars are used to transport visitors of the guided studio tour through restricted areas of Babelsberg to shooting locations of films and other historical places on the premises. Other cars feature the logos of UFA and Studio Babelsberg, scenes from Fritz Lang's Metropolis and other famous UFA films, and references to current TV shows produced at the film studio. The display of the DEFA logo on the trolley seems to acknowledge, at least tacitly, that there was an East German film culture with its own institutions. The logo's association with German film history, however, depends upon what visitors know before they enter the park. Similar to the film poster of DEFA science fiction, which is integrated and yet seems detached from the overall meaning of the exhibit, the DEFA logo vaguely suggests the historical place of GDR film in Babelsberg without providing further explanation to the visitor. In contrast to the prominently featured visual representations of UFA, Studio Babelsberg, and modern TV productions on the trolleys, the historical presence of the DEFA remains hidden to the majority of Germans.

³² The successful release of five DEFA Sci-Fi films as a DVD collection in Germany and the US shows that the films were in fact interesting examinations of a possible future. The focus of the films is more on the cooperation of many nations in space exploration than on violent space battles.

The most striking reference to the DEFA and its international success lives on in the *Traumland* section of the theme park. It is comprised of various areas inspired by German films. One of these parts, *Die Gärten des kleinen Muck*, is modeled after the most successful DEFA film ever made, Wolfgang Staudte's Die Geschichte vom kleinen Muck (1953). A reproduction of one of the original sets from the film complete with the sultan's palace, large reflecting pools and fountains invites visitors to rest and immerse themselves in the imaginary world of the fairytale. The 1953 DEFA film became a classic and is known internationally as arguably the best film version of Wilhelm Hauff's fairytale. Like many DEFA fairytales, Staudte's film was popular among children and adults in the Federal Republic. Many West Germans were not aware that the film was produced by the DEFA and up to this day do not associate the film with the DEFA.

All three examples illustrate the limited extent to which the DEFA is present in the Filmpark Babelsberg. The few signs of DEFA films in the theme park are not intended to venerate the legacy of East German cinema. They have been integrated in the park to emphasize the general history of German film, but have lost their status as icons of objectified culture. Instead of their previous status as East German cultural heritage, these concealed references are now parts of the theme park and no longer hold their standing as cultural memory in the context of the Filmpark Babelsberg.

FILMMUSEUM POTSDAM

I pointed out in the beginning of this chapter that Assmann's distinction of the two modes of potentiality and actuality (as different ways of preserving cultural memory) described the preservation of artifacts at museums as an expression of the mode of potentiality. In this mode, the preserved items are stored as elements from a past culture. The Filmmuseum Potsdam adopted the mode of actuality for a permanent exhibit about

the history of DEFA cinema when it looked at DEFA films in the context of filmmaking at Babelsberg, and created a cultural experience that redefined the films as part of a living cultural memory.

The Filmmuseum Potsdam dedicated a section of its exhibition space to a permanent exhibit about cinema at Babelsberg. After the success of the first Babelsberg exhibit in 1994, the second exhibit was opened in 2004 with the premise to show “was außer Kinokopien vom Film bleibt.”³³ The main exhibition space is filled exclusively with items from the DEFA period between 1946 and 1992. On display are pictures and posters, documents, costumes, and original items from the sets of many DEFA films. There are also two rooms that contain information and exhibits about the UFA and Studio Babelsberg and set the stage for a historical understanding of DEFA cinema.³⁴

The interactive design of the museum allows visitors to “build” their own tour through DEFA history. They choose the most appealing aspects from the abundance of information in the DEFA exhibit, and apply the meaning of those objects in the past to their lives in the new social and historical environment of the Federal Republic. In other words, a visit to the museum acts as a commemoration of personal memories that are triggered by the visual stimulation of items from the DEFA.³⁵

The main exhibit hall is divided into three parts. Upon entering the hall, visitors can begin their tour either with (1) the chronology of DEFA history and historic events in Germany, (2) a section illustrating the decades of DEFA filmmaking with displays of costumes, regalia, and artifacts from DEFA films, or (3) a section that invites reflection

³³ The computer information terminal at the entrance to the exhibit features this slogan on its start screen.

³⁴ The Filmmuseum Berlin at Potsdamer Platz covers the history of German film extensively. In contrast to this museum the Filmmuseum Potsdam concentrates on the topic of film at Babelsberg.

³⁵ Charles Maier observed a similar non-linear exhibit structure at the Smithsonian Museum of American History. In the discussion of a German national museum, this structure was proposed to be applied to the new museum. The idea behind such a structure was to “stimulate argumentation, but also to offer possibilities for identification” (128).

on the relationship of DEFA film and society with film clips and audio recordings. The entire area is open to allow easy roaming between the sections.

A chronology of Germany after the Second World War covers the entire length of the exhibit hall's right wall. Vertical columns along the wall are dedicated to each year of German history since 1945. Inscribed on them are the dual histories and cultural events of FRG and GDR, occasionally supplemented with photos of these events. Brief text passages explaining the genesis of DEFA and the close ties between studio and SED alternate with chronological information on these columns. Underneath the columns are glass displays with everyday items from the GDR and the Federal Republic, where GDR card games and socialist school books are placed next to the rubix cube and a record of the song Sonderzug nach Pankow by West German pop star Udo Lindenberg.

The chronology on the wall performs three functions. First, it introduces the chronological structure of the exhibit and establishes the historical framework of the museum. It is clear that the exhibit focuses on the post-1945 history of Babelsberg. Second, visitors not familiar with the dual history of Germany after 1945 are able to compare and contrast events from the GDR and the FRG. The exhibit states that a continuous progression of German history took place after 1945 with permanent points of contact between both societies. Third, integrating the DEFA studio's history in a combined timeline of GDR and FRG history stresses the self-conception of DEFA cinema as part of German cinema.

Four blocks of glass display cases form the second part of the exhibit at the center of the room. Each block covers thematically one decade of DEFA films from 1946 to 1992. All display cases are divided in three parts, which – taken together – provide a well-rounded picture of DEFA filmmaking in a particular decade. The upper third of each display contains posters, documents, letters and excerpts of DEFA screenplays.

Some of these exhibits cover the discussion between artists and SED about meaning and cultural impact of DEFA films in GDR society, illustrating the struggle between artistic freedom and cultural politics in DEFA film. Many DEFA film controversies are documented in this section, incorporating material from the federal archives. Exploration and discovery of DEFA films are at the heart of the center section. Pull-out drawers with the names of DEFA directors and stars contain biographies or filmographies, some explain the exhibits from the display in their context, and others detail the history of DEFA films considered to be representative of a decade. Small video screens play on-demand video clips and trailers of DEFA films to help visualize the controversies about the exhibits in the cases above. The bottom segment of each display is dedicated to costumes and original props used in those films. It showcases the variety in styles, film genre, and ingenuity of DEFA filmmakers. Unlike the upper sections of the display cases, which document the history of DEFA films along with their status in politics and society, the bottom section helps in the preservation of the films as cultural memory. The memorabilia trigger concrete memories of the film plot, which manifest the film as cultural object in the reality of the visitor, while the documents help to understand the historical context of the film in the GDR past.

Visitors of the exhibit are invited to reflect on the significance of DEFA films as part of German film history in a third part of the hall. Four elevated areas encourage critical engagement with DEFA film and its perspectives in the new cultural environment of the Federal Republic. These four areas prompt the visitor to go beyond the usual museum visit, to form an opinion about DEFA films and interpret the information in the exhibit. The first area resembles a recently vacated small office space. On the walls, the outline of recently removed furniture is visible on wallpaper to symbolize the sudden end of the DEFA. Recordings of former DEFA employees narrate their private memories of

the DEFA. The empty room symbolizes the void left behind in the lives of many who worked for the DEFA. It also serves as a counterpoint to the mass of information in the other parts of the exhibit, signaling the commemorative character of the museum and its contribution to the preservation of DEFA films. Two areas about the making of DEFA animated films and the DEFA circus film 1-2-3-Corona remind visitors of the variety of DEFA films. Small scale models explain how skilled DEFA technicians applied their ingenuity to create illusions of dragons in film tricks without the help of computer animation. Books, costumes, and a play area invite children and adults to be inspired by the DEFA films and to use their imagination. The use of DEFA films as educational tools discloses their ongoing value for children in the Federal Republic. A fourth area looks at the fate of banned DEFA films. Inside a closed space stands a copy of a sculpture by the artist Ernst Barlach used in the DEFA film Der verlorene Engel (Ralf Kirsten 1966). Kirsten's film about the expressionist sculptor Barlach – who was persecuted by the National Socialist Regime – is regarded as an innovative work of a DEFA avant-garde, although it was banned. The sculpture encourages visitors to understand the tension between the DEFA and politics in the GDR. DEFA films are therefore also at times presented as symbols of civil disobedience against the totalitarian regime of the GDR, not merely as filmic repositories of nostalgia.

CONCLUSION

Despite their elementary role for DEFA's afterlife, the six institutions have not received the recognition as agents of a DEFA legacy in post-unification Germany. Here, cultural archeology helped to identify various layers of continuity and presence of DEFA and assemble the pieces – or players – to show how DEFA as institution has remained one. Now, the former intact “vase” exists in the form of six artifacts, the six institutions

that have contributed to the invention of a DEFA tradition and helped to establish the films in the Federal Republic within a few years. Even without the production of new DEFA films, it is possible for the DEFA-Stiftung to work with a closed corpus of films and credibly cast the films as artifacts of a tradition; the immense number of more than 750 extant films provides enough material to work with for the near future. The traditional character of DEFA films is also promoted with the release of new films produced by Progress. Often, DEFA films are released to the market simultaneously to promote the new film and the old films. This strategy of recognition has paid off in the past: releases like Volker Schlöndorff's Der neunte Tag (2004) were promoted with special screenings of "classic" DEFA antifascist films such as Jakob der Lügner and Nackt unter Wölfen. Similar promotions are likely to continue in the future.

The DEFA-Stiftung's unique position as a centralized institution in charge of all DEFA films offers services unavailable to films from West Germany. While West German films are marketed by a number of distributors, the DEFA-Stiftung is the only central organization for DEFA films, coordinating all activities associated with the films. Furthermore, the DEFA-Stiftung has managed to provide excellent service; with quick turnaround in answering requests, efficient promotion of DEFA films, and an efficient organization structure, the DEFA-Stiftung, with only two full-time employees, has managed to stay out of the spotlight as DEFA's successor. Instead, the foundation has enabled an exclusive focus on the DEFA films as DEFA's legacy in the Federal Republic. As a result of its work, DEFA films have been transformed into indispensable elements of an East German tradition.

Chapter 3

DEFA Films in the Federal Republic after 1992

DEFA films are more popular than ever before in their history. Increasing numbers of screenings and broadcasts have contributed to a renewed interest in DEFA films among East and West Germans alike. The availability of the films on the home video and DVD rental market may account for the films' rising success, but the real reason seems to be a different perception of DEFA films. Their timeless appeal to all generations, according to the retired director of the DEFA-Stiftung, Wolfgang Klaue, is only one possible explanation of the films' popularity: "Die Filme der DDR sind nicht nur ein kulturelles Relikt aus der Vergangenheit. Jede Generation könnte sie neu und anders entdecken und befragen – gerade das macht die Spannung aus" (Mund "Haftung").

The continuous demand for the films in post-unification Germany, especially in the East, also indicate that DEFA films have undergone significant reevaluation; previously, the films were considered products of a totalitarian society, and today, they are products of an invented (East) German tradition. This chapter will trace how the screening of DEFA films evolved in the Federal Republic, how the films are integrated in the current German media landscape, and how these practices enabled the films' rapid transformation to an invented tradition. Whether DEFA films are screened in theaters, broadcast on regional television stations in East Germany, or sold as DVDs with extensive bonus material, they continue to enjoy both commercial success and a privileged position as artifacts of an invented East German tradition.

These new DVDs, which include bonus material that explains the historical conditions surrounding the production of DEFA films, sell especially well in the West. The surprising success of these DVDs in the West indicates a shift in attitudes toward DEFA films. The post-unification generations tend to understand DEFA film as part of a German film tradition, and the demand for DEFA films is evident in the way the films are reviewed and prominently featured in magazines.

Still, one cannot overlook the fact that the majority of DEFA films are consumed in East Germany, reflecting a division between East and West Germans. The films were marketed to appeal primarily to East German viewers after unification. Advertising referred heavily to the historical connection between the films and their target audience. The films were conceptualized as representative elements of a shared GDR past, positioning the films as inaccessible to viewers without the proper historical background. In short, DEFA films are a regional East German tradition at this point in time.

DEFA FILM ON GERMAN TV

Since 1990, DEFA films have existed within the realm of the Federal Republic as cultural objects from a German past. They are screened predominantly in East German movie theaters or on regional TV channels broadcasting for areas within the former GDR. Such broadcasting patterns reinforce the perception of DEFA films as regional cinema meant for East Germans. Since stations limit the broadcasting of the films to the area that coincides with the borders of the former GDR, television appears to posit a direct correlation between audience identity and programming content. Following Maurice Halbwachs's assumption that collective memory is determined by the closeness of a group (1980: 78), I suggest that this shared experience of regional classification unites East Germans. Instead of rejecting DEFA films as former propaganda tools, some East

Germans use the films to confront their individual pasts and revise their understandings of GDR history (Winkler).

The changes in the screening practices of DEFA films in the past 15 years also reflect a trend among East Germans to emphasize GDR history as an important part of German history. DEFA films had virtually disappeared from the TV screens immediately after unification and returned only sporadically (Schuler). TV stations remained hesitant to show programs with a political or propagandistic background. Cultural critic Martin Mund pointed out that Kurt Maetzig's film Ernst Thälmann – Sohn Seiner Klasse (1954) was only shown once after 1989 on the TV channel Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg (ORB), but protests caused the station to cancel the 1955 sequel Ernst Thälmann – Führer Seiner Klasse ("Gesellschaftskritik"). Although the distrust of communist propaganda in DEFA films has not entirely subsided, TV stations are now prepared to show this film genre, preceded by a proper introduction by experts that is often followed by a round table discussion about the film.³⁶ The films have turned into historical objects and testimonials of GDR culture.

DEFA films are now recognized by East Germans as cultural accomplishments, which stands in stark contrast to the historical reception of DEFA films in the GDR. The GDR government strictly regulated entertainment choices, deciding the amount and frequency of film imports as well as the actual number of foreign films to be played. DEFA films, however, were always guaranteed screening time in movie theaters and on TV due to the DEFA's status as a state sanctioned company.³⁷ In terms of overall film

³⁶ The best example for this approach is the *Themenabend* on the German-French channel ARTE. An entire evening is dedicated to a topic, which is often introduced by a documentary, followed by the feature film, and rounded up with a discussion of experts.

³⁷ In contrast to the Federal Republic of Germany with more than 40 film production companies between 1946 and 1948, the GDR centralized film making in the DEFA. Thus, DEFA films had a high screen exposure at the time of the *Wende*, since a quota required screenings of DEFA films (Kersten, "Entwicklungslinien": 9).

screenings, only 23% of the films in East German theaters between 1983 and 1987 were from non-DEFA studios (Meurer 287). The annual output of the DEFA studio was about 45 films per year, about half the output of the Federal Republic (Berghahn 25). DEFA films were produced as didactic entertainment, presenting the ideas of Marxism-Leninism in the GDR in an accessible, popular format: “Das Fernsehen ... propagierte ... den planmäßigen Aufbau des Sozialismus, vertrat die ... Interessen der Arbeiterklasse ... stand mit in der vordersten Linie bei der Entlarvung der Restauration des Imperialismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland” (Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen der DDR 164). More important than film’s role in the development of socialism, however, was the importance of entertainment and distraction after work. Similar to other modern societies, GDR citizens chose their distraction according to the quality of entertainment. Thus, if a DEFA film on GDR TV did not fulfill the expectations of its audience, the viewers simply switched from the GDR channels to West German channels. In 1987, for example, 100 films from the Eastern bloc claimed 49 per cent of the audience, while 34 Western films attracted 36.4 per cent of viewers (Meurer 127). One study of the popularity of GDR media shows that quality was crucial for the success of a film or a program, regardless of its East or West German origin (Meyen).

Early on, it was possible for most GDR citizens to choose between the two West German channels, Erstes Deutsches Fernsehen and ZDF (*Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen*), and their GDR counterparts, DFF 1 and DFF 2 (*Deutscher Fernsehfunk*).³⁸ Adverse geographical conditions prevented the reception of West German television in the so-called ‘Valley of the Innocents’ around Dresden, while residents of other geographical areas were able to improve their reception of West television by placing large antennas and, later, large satellite dishes on their roofs (Meyen 19). Watching West German TV

³⁸ The DFF was renamed to *Fernsehen der DDR* and became again *Deutscher Fernsehfunk* after the *Wende*.

was frowned upon and discouraged by the SED, yet not forbidden by law,³⁹ and many took the opportunity to choose the entertainment they liked best. While DEFA films made up the majority of films on GDR TV, with the DEFA being the sole producer of national GDR cinema (Scholz 44), imports from other countries, as well as productions modeled after West German shows, were always serious contenders for the attention of TV audiences (Hanke 10).⁴⁰ The two channels of GDR TV were phased out after German unification and were replaced by new regional East German public stations of the ARD (Stein 138). With the end of GDR television, DEFA films lost their guaranteed screening times and had to compete for slots with other films on the new channels in the dual system of the Federal Republic (Reiter 174).

The dual system of public and private television, comprised of the public stations, ARD and ZDF, and a wide array of private stations, has existed since the liberalization of the state monopoly in 1981 (Hickethier 34). A German “public” station is a public agency, an *Anstalt des öffentlichen Rechts*. The public stations are controlled and subsidized by a board of directors from political parties, unions, churches, and non-profit organizations (Springer 39). Every German that owns a radio or TV has to pay a monthly fee to support public broadcasting in Germany. The Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen ZDF is a federal station and broadcasts only one channel in Germany.⁴¹ The ARD is a cooperative of regional channels. Currently, nine regional stations are organized in the

³⁹ Party officials and people in state positions were not allowed to watch the West channels if they did not want to jeopardize their positions. They were expected to obtain information pertinent to their positions from official bulletins, Eduard Schnitzler’s TV show *Der Schwarze Kanal*, or the newspaper. Meyen’s study and his interviews about entertainment preferences with former GDR citizens go into a lot of detail on this subject.

⁴⁰ Some scholars now go so far to argue that DEFA productions actually were more independent from West German TV because of their concern with the GDR’s realm of life (Hoff 154). However, many GDR shows were simply continued after unification without major modifications (Früh 29), which demonstrates that the programs were already close to West German entertainment and therefore easy to include.

⁴¹ In 1997, the ZDF launched its digital platform ZDFvision, with its three channels ZDF dokukanal for documentaries, ZDF theaterkanal for theater productions, and ZDF infokanal as a news station (Papathanassopolous).

ARD. Each station covers its own exclusive region of the Federal Republic: the Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR) for the federal state Bavaria; Radio Bremen (RB) for the cities Bremen and Bremerhaven; Hessischer Rundfunk (HR) for Hessen; Südwestrundfunk (SWR) for Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate; Saarländischer Rundfunk (SR) for the Saarland; Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) for North Rhine-Westphalia; Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) for Hamburg, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig-Holstein; and, since 1990, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

NDR and RBB⁴² are stations broadcasting in areas that used to be parts of both the GDR and the old Federal Republic. The ninth channel, Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk MDR, was founded in 1990 after protracted controversies about the creation of public radio and television in the former GDR⁴³, and is responsible for the states Thuringia, Saxony, and Saxony-Anhalt. All regional ARD stations run a common channel, Das Erste, which was the inaugural German TV station.⁴⁴ ARD and ZDF also jointly run the children's station Kinderkanal (KIKa), the German-Swiss-Austrian channel 3Sat, and the German-French channel ARTE (Hickethier "Geschichte" 431).

The second component of the dual broadcasting system is the private television market. The first private channels were launched in 1984. Most of the private stations are free television, financed by revenue from commercials, and only three companies – Premiere, Kabel Deutschland, and Arena – offer pay TV. Premiere offers a wide array of sport and film channels (Brockmeyer and Eichholz), as well as special interest channels, such as Premiere Nostalgie, for films produced between 1930 and 1970: "Deutsche und

⁴² In 2004, the Sender Freies Berlin SFB and the Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg ORB merged to become the Radio Berlin Brandenburg RBB. The studios are located on the premises of the Medienstadt Babelsberg, formerly the DEFA Studio für Spielfilme.

⁴³ For a good documentation see Roland Tichy and Sylvia Dietl, Deutschland Einig Rundfunkland

⁴⁴ The ARD runs a digital network as well: ARD digital consists of Eins Festival with broadcasts of concerts, theater production and classical films, Eins Plus, formerly Eins Muxx, showing the content of Das Erste at a different time of the day. Eins Extra runs hourly news, informative magazines, discussions, and documentaries (Trimborn 28).

internationale Klassiker, unvergessene Serien und große Stars: PREMIERE NOSTALGIE zeigt das Beste aus rund 40 Jahren Filmgeschichte“ ("Programm Alle Kanäle"). German film history is presented as a mixture of war films such as 08/15 in der Heimat, (Paul May, 1955), thrillers such as Zwischen Shanghai und St. Pauli (Wolfgang Schleif, 1962), erotic films such as Ernst Hofbauer's Der Neue Schulmädchen Report (1971), and Nazi films such as Sieben Jahre Pech (Ernst Marischka, 1940). Private channels have to maintain their share of the television market to maintain their income from commercials (Trimborn 22). These stations concentrate on the established and successful TV formats: talk shows, game shows, or reality shows modeled after the American market. Feature films are usually dubbed in German, and edited versions of major Hollywood productions or films produced by small German companies are also shown.

Programming on public TV follows a separate set of guidelines. Subscription fees allow public TV to limit the number of commercials on ARD and ZDF, and the regional channels are always commercial-free. The fees also permit ARD and ZDF to focus on program quality rather than commercial viability. This is important since the public stations follow cultural and educational agendas with their *Bildungsauftrag* (Menningen 81). ARD, ZDF, and especially the regional channels, broadcast intellectual and cultural programs on topics of special interest for certain regions: "Die ARD wird auch in Zukunft die Aufgabe erfüllen, Kultur nicht nur einer schmalen Elite sondern breiten Schichten der Bevölkerung zugänglich zu machen" (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Öffentlich-Rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten Deutschlands 389).

The programming of some regional stations indicates that they rely on GDR history to reach their audience. All regional stations in the ARD, better known as *Drittes*

Programm,⁴⁵ show regional news, broadcast shows tailored to the local character of their respective state, programs in local dialect, and represent the *Heimat* character of the regions (Röhl 19). The three stations covering the area of the former GDR – NDR, MDR, and RBB – show more news from East Germany than other stations (Früh 120-1). Furthermore, they often continue shows from the former GDR (Tichy 340-1), or have employed anchormen who used to work for the GDR TV station DFF. The feature films on the regional channels are older films that have a demonstrable connection to the respective region. Established faces from GDR TV are still familiar to the viewers and evoke memories of the past (Früh 29). DEFA films are regularly shown on the East German regional channels MDR and RBB because of the films' specific GDR history. Outside of East Germany, these specific programs and shows would not have the same appeal to audiences.

DEFA films appear almost exclusively on regional public TV for two reasons. First, the films are intellectually demanding and fulfill the requirements of the intellectual agenda set forth by German public TV. DEFA films require significant background knowledge in order for the viewer to view the film critically. Since they are films depicting the cultural realities of the GDR, they are concerned with past events of GDR history and reflections of its society. While East Germans are familiar with the language, social structures, and references within DEFA films, audiences from the West have to get accustomed to settings, actors, storylines, etc. East Germans, on the other hand, have at least a cursory knowledge of life in the West from West German TV. Second, DEFA films are representations of GDR history. They symbolize the regions in the East and help to position these regions historically in the overall context of the Federal Republic. These films create a new history imbued with the memories of East Germans. DEFA

⁴⁵ Before the advent of the dual system, *Das Erste* was the first channel, the ZDF the second channel, and the regional stations the third channel on TV sets.

films on regional TV are reminiscent of GDR entertainment, and they are clearly differentiated from revived GDR shows and recent regional news. East Germans identify with the films as part of their past, while they view contemporary shows and news as signs of continuity. DEFA films, however, remind viewers of the past.⁴⁶

The narrow interest in DEFA films on private TV is reflected in films' absence in their programming. DEFA features are likely believed to be too GDR-specific in their plot to attract an audience large enough to justify a screening on private TV. Their structure concentrates on character development instead of the quick progression of the plot: "For those accustomed to the pace and action of Hollywood films, DEFA productions may seem lethargic ... There were hardly any sequences of rapid editing ... and lack of closure in DEFA dramas" (Naughton 29). In short, most DEFA films were considered inadequate entertainment options for most private TV stations.

Notable exceptions to this trend are the private TV screenings of DEFA film "classics." Most TV audiences are unaware that these films originated in the GDR, and often the actors are familiar to viewers in East and West⁴⁷ because they appeared in West German productions as well. The classic films Die Mörder sind unter uns, Nackt unter Wölfen and Jakob der Lügner were voted among the best 100 German films of all time ("CD: Die Deutschen") and have been repeatedly shown on private TV channels.⁴⁸ They depict National Socialism and are usually shown in the context of commemorative

⁴⁶ A comparison of the results of a field study I conducted with studies about TV viewing customs in East Germany shows that regional news and shows are preferred because they talked about events that affected the viewers directly.

⁴⁷ The best examples are Manfred Krug and Armin Mueller-Stahl.

⁴⁸ VOX and XXP are the two stations with the most DEFA films on private TV. VOX carefully selects DEFA classics; XXP often shows rare and unknown films too. XXP was a private station owned by Spiegel TV and the production company dctp. XXP defined itself as a station concentrating on cultural events and "white-collar entertainment" ("Wir über Uns"). Notable films on XXP were films by the last generation of DEFA directors, for example Peter Kahane's Die Architekten (1990). In 2006, XXP was purchased by Discovery Channel, changed its name to DMAX and - according to their web site - turned into an "entertainment channel for men."

events, such as the anniversaries of the liberation of Auschwitz, or German capitulation in 1945 (“Das Programm”).⁴⁹

Of particular significance is the absence of DEFA films from the programming of the channel Premiere Nostalgie. Over the course of more than a year, not a single DEFA film appeared on the listings of the channels.⁵⁰ “Das Beste aus 40 Jahren Filmgeschichte” – Premiere’s advertising slogan for its nostalgia channel – excludes GDR film and narrows German film history down to an outdated, pre-unification, West German perspective. Premiere’s decision not to broadcast DEFA films appears to be based on ideological rather than economic considerations, since Premiere does not rely on commercials to finance its programming, working instead with monthly subscription rates.

A sample analysis of DEFA film broadcasts on German television yields a snapshot of the distribution and frequency of the films. This analysis also leads to some general conclusions about the overall state of DEFA films on German TV. In a span of four weeks between mid-September and mid-October 2005, 25 films produced at the DEFA Studio were broadcast on public and private stations in Germany. I observed all available German channels at this time, including the digital platforms of ARD, ZDF, and all channels of Premiere.⁵¹ My main sources were two web sites and one magazine that listed broadcast times for DEFA films. My research indicated that the majority of these films were shown on the regional channels, followed by the digital and analog cable

⁴⁹ VOX was the only private station that showed *Nackt unter Wölfen* and *Jakob der Lügner* on 8 May, 2005. Both films were broadcast back to back, starting at 8:15 PM. Other private stations commemorated the 60th anniversary of the Auschwitz liberation with other films.

⁵⁰ I studied the listing of Premiere Nostalgie between May 2004 and August 2005. There was not a single DEFA film listed over the period of 16 months, while other West German films had their fourth and fifth rerun.

⁵¹ At this time, Premiere, ARD and ZDF already offered their digital package with multiple channels. Kabel Deutschland was not yet on the market, and DF1, a former competitor of Premiere, had been taken over by the pay TV company. The DF1 channels had been merged into Premiere.

channels of the ARD, and finally a small number of private stations. ZDF ranked last in the number of DEFA film screenings on average. The internet web site *DEFA Sternstunden* provided the listings of four weeks of DEFA productions (“Informationen”) on the analog TV channels with basic background information about plot, actors, and production information. A second web site, *Made in GDR*, added the programs on the digital channels, and listed the broadcast times of documentaries and other films about the GDR (Engemann). My third source was the bi-weekly Berlin magazine *Zitty*. Each day, a comprehensive TV guide for the analog channels provided broadcast times and film titles, highlighting the most important film of the day in a “Tagestipp”.

Without exception, all of the films were shown on public television; during these four weeks, no DEFA film appeared on a private station or on one of the digital channels.

Table 1: TV Broadcasts of DEFA Films on German TV, September/ October 2005

Date	Title of film	Time	Channel
29 September	Jahrgang 45 (1966)	12.50 AM	Das Erste
1 October	Tambari (1977)	8.10 AM	MDR
	Chingachgook, die große Schlange (1967)	2.25 PM	RBB
03 October	Das Schulgespenst (1987)	5.55 AM	RBB
	Die Geschichte vom kleinen Muck (1953)	7.00 AM	HR
	Fahrschule (1986)	8.55 AM	RBB
	Die Geschichte vom kleinen Muck (1953)	3.10 PM	RBB
4 October	Fahrschule (1986)	1.15 AM	BR
	Froschkönig (1988)	3.10 PM	RBB
5 October	Wie heiratet man einen König (1969)	3.10 PM	RBB

	Jana und Jan (1992)*	10.25 PM	ZDF
7 October	Frau Holle (1963)	3.10 PM	RBB
8 October	Das blaue Licht (1976)	2.40 PM	RBB
9 October	Semmelweis – Retter der Mütter (1950)	6.20 AM	MDR
	Dach überm Kopf (1980)	11.00 AM	MDR
	Wie heiratet man einen König (1969)	12.00 PM	KIKA
	Der Prinz hinter den sieben Meeren (1982)	2.40 PM	RBB
16 October	Fahrschule (1986)	6.35 AM	MDR
	Goya (1971) **	11.30 PM	RBB
	Ich war neunzehn (1968)	11.40 PM	NDR
17 October	Genesung (1956)	10.50 PM	MDR
	Der geteilte Himmel (1964)	11.00 PM	RBB
20 October	Lissy (1957)	10.25 PM	3 Sat
21 October	Die Tigerin (1992)***	1.05 AM	Das Erste
	Der geteilte Himmel (1964)	10.30 PM	3 Sat

* Co-production with the ZDF

** Co-production with the USSR

*** Co-production with CineVox Munich

DEFA films are generally well represented on German TV. Sometimes the same film is broadcast on more than one channel, but there is one DEFA film per day on average, making it fairly easy to find a GDR film on TV. About 65 percent of all DEFA films were broadcast on only two channels, MDR and RBB; DEFA films are an integral part of their programming scheme. The regional ARD channels MDR and RBB show programs that survived the transition from the Fernsehen der DDR to the DFF and from

there to MDR and RBB. To a great extent, the feature films shown on RBB are in fact films from the former GDR. The MDR dedicates its weekends to DEFA films from the first and the last decade of the GDR. Often, films are repeated on other regional channels, and occasionally there are reruns on other channels for a national or even European audience (Der geteilte Himmel on 3Sat), or for children on the KiKa (Wie heiratet man einen König).

Most of the DEFA films are broadcast on regional East German TV, which are only available outside of their regional area to households subscribing to digital TV. However, it is safe to assume that the majority of these households will only watch a DEFA film unintentionally.⁵² DEFA films retain their character as regional films of East Germany. The six DEFA films aired on Das Erste, ZDF, 3Sat and KiKa are exceptions to the rule. Films selected for broadcast on the children's channel KiKa are more universal in their approach. They do not reflect political views or require knowledge of GDR society. Their careful pedagogical structure helps children and young adults to identify with the protagonists. In fact, DEFA fairytales and children's films were the best known DEFA films in the Federal Republic, where generations of children grew up with DEFA films during and after the Cold War. Even now, the films are considered among the best films for children and young adults (König). The film Jana und Jan was co-produced by the DEFA and the ZDF in 1992 after unification. It was one of the last DEFA films made and is a project of the ZDF with the assistance of DEFA employees. The film Die Tigerin that aired on Das Erste is a similar case. It was produced with the help of the company Cinevox in 1992, when the DEFA studio was closing its doors for good. Since Die Tigerin is a film about Berlin in the 1920s, it includes no immediate references to the

⁵² These subscribers pay an additional fee to have digital programming delivered. They are most likely customers of the pay TV platform Premiere or the soccer channel Arena. The regional channels come free with the digital receiver.

GDR, which made it easier for West German audiences to understand the film. Jahrgang 45 on Das Erste was bound to attract viewers regardless of their origin. The film was advertised as one of the banned films to arouse interest among viewers in the East and West. The almost universal curiosity of East and West Germans about “forbidden films” justified a federal broadcast of Jahrgang 45. The broadcasts of Konrad Wolf’s films Lissy and Der geteilte Himmel on 3Sat celebrated the cultural accomplishments of the director and his lifetime achievements. Both features depict periods of German history with universal interest for all Germans. Lissy is set in National Socialist Germany, and Der geteilte Himmel, based on a book by Christa Wolf, tells the story of a couple that is separated by the Berlin Wall.

The inconvenient broadcast times of the films seems to indicate the underprivileged position of DEFA films on another level. None of the films air during German prime time,⁵³ and only the children’s films start in the mornings. Most of the DEFA features are broadcast after prime time, and the timing of these broadcasts prevents many viewers from seeing the films. For some it is too late, and others do not even learn about the broadcast of a DEFA film because such information can be difficult to come by. Many TV guides in Germany only print the complete listings for the national networks. The listings of small and regional channels are limited to the afternoon and prime time, when no DEFA films are on the air.

Half of the films on the list were “DEFA classics” in the GDR.⁵⁴ Jahrgang 45 was among the banned films of 1965, Chingachgook die große Schlange was one of twelve popular *Indianerfilme* in the GDR (Gemünden), and the films Ich war neunzehn and Lissy belong to the genre of anti-fascist films, which was always considered one of

⁵³ Prime time on German TV is the slot after the national TV news. It begins at 8:15pm and ends at approximately 10:45pm with the nightly national TV news.

⁵⁴ I use the term classic film to indicate a popular film.

the best genres of DEFA film. The same attraction applied to children's' films and fairytales, for example Die Geschichte vom kleinen Muck. The other half of the films reflected a good mix of the rich film production at the DEFA studio.

This second half especially targeted the memories of East Germans who were familiar with the films. The non-classic DEFA films shown on regional channels suggest how these channels function as a bridge to the GDR past, because the programming on these channels is tailored toward East Germans. The broadcast of non-classic films on nationwide channels would indicate the acceptance of East German culture as part of a new national identity. However, the "new all-German identity that centres almost exclusively on West German values" (Berghahn 212) indicates that German film remains committed, first and foremost, to West German audiences. DEFA film on the regional channels contributes to the construction of an exclusive society that continues the tradition of GDR cinema.

DEFA FILM ON RECORDED MEDIA

Recorded media have been a part of our lives for many years. Examples of recorded media present in many households are videotapes in various formats (mainly VHS, but also Beta, DV, Hi 8 etc) and DVD (DVD, HD-DVD, Blu-Ray etc.). They have become indispensable in recording our favorite programs on TV, to be watched later at one's convenience. Instead of being bound to TV broadcast schedules, recorded media allows the audience to watch a film at any given time. A film can be paused, rewound, fast forwarded, and continued at a later time. VHS cassettes and DVD discs are also available for purchase, which presents an alternative to the programming schedule on TV. One can acquire films at leisure and share the films with other people.

Recorded media and recording devices have only been available to citizens of the GDR since the fall of the Wall in November 1989. The ruling party, the SED, had placed a ban on duplicating devices to curb the reproduction of material potentially harmful to the regime (Fritzsche and Löser). As a result of the laws in the GDR, as stated in the *Gesetzesblatt Teil 1 Nr. 6* dated 11 February 1976, video recording devices were not accessible to the public since they could have been used as tools against the government. Due to GDR copyright laws and the absence of recording devices such as VCRs, DEFA films were never released on recorded media in the GDR.

The lack of general access to DEFA films via recorded media proved to be a disadvantage for the DEFA. After November 1989, when citizens of the GDR purchased merchandise from the West that was now freely accessible, many acquired VCRs. While the last Statistisches Jahrbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik in 1990 does not yet list the production and possession of video recorders (Statistisches Amt der DDR 53), more than 75% of the households in East Germany owned a video recorder in 1998 (Statistisches Bundesamt 554). This number dropped to 70% in 2004, due to the replacement of many VCRs with DVD players that could already be found in more than 31% of East German households ("Ausstattung privater Haushalte"). The East German market has been saturated with video recording devices and has now reached a level that is equivalent to West German households.

When VCRs arrived in the GDR, the GDR TV stations DFF 1 and DFF 2 were still broadcasting DEFA films in their regular schedule. Soon afterwards, political changes affected TV as well, and caused DEFA films to disappear slowly from the screens. At this time, no DEFA films were available for private home viewing.⁵⁵ East Germans had to rely on the few private recordings of films from the brief time between

⁵⁵ It was unclear at this time who owned the rights to DEFA films until the DEFA-Stiftung was declared to be the legal successor of the DEFA.

November 1989 and the disappearance of the DFF in 1992.⁵⁶ After the transition of the DFF to the regional East German stations of the ARD, DEFA films reappeared once again, although less frequently.

A similar development took place on the market of recorded media. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, the number of DEFA films available on VHS and DVD has risen considerably in the past few years. The foundation of the DEFA-Stiftung in 1999 made it possible to launch the mass production of the films. The DEFA-Stiftung authorized the video production company Icestorm to exclusively market DEFA films in Germany and abroad. Although general sales in the first years after the initial release of DEFA films were slow, the demand for the films increased, and subsequently allowed a larger production of DEFA titles. In 1995, Icestorm offered 96 DEFA films on VCR and DVD for sale to customers in Germany (“Produkte”). The video rental market responded to the regained popularity of DEFA films only recently. At the end of 2003, only ten video stores in the entire FRG offered DEFA films for rent (Löblein), which did not quite fulfill the high hopes of “DEFA-Filme als Renner der Videothek” (Wahl). All of the stores were located in the former GDR, with most of them in East Berlin.

The recent increase in the number of stores carrying DEFA titles indicates that the attitude towards DEFA films has changed. The films symbolize history and the collective memory of East Germans. They are no longer only seen as individual recollections of private memories. Associations of the films with the GDR as a totalitarian state have given way to a new understanding of DEFA film as a medium that reflects GDR society and shows the everyday life of GDR citizens. When viewers were aware of the economic problems the GDR faced, it was obvious when film plots conformed to official decrees and depicted an idealized society.

⁵⁶ One can assume that not too many private copies of DEFA films were made during this time. Most East Germans purchases the VCRs to catch up with the Hollywood films they were not able to see.

Changes in the material included on a DVD also contributed to a rising interest in DEFA films. DEFA enthusiasts are often more interested in the bonus material on a DVD than they are in the actual film. Although the first DVDs of DEFA films only contained the film, later editions and new releases often present various subtitle options, interviews, and footage of the film's actual production. Other material often includes the history of, and anecdotes about, film production in the GDR, background information about everyday life in the East, and documentary footage. This bonus material is meant to enhance the viewer's understanding and enjoyment of the feature film.

Over the past decade, the marketing strategy for DEFA films also changed. Icestorm was the primary seller and producer of DEFA films, and Icestorm's first releases were dedicated to a small audience of cineastes already familiar with the films. At the beginning of Icestorm's campaign in 1998, DEFA films were sold exclusively on the internet. The inventory of films to be released on home video grew slowly, but was met with an increasing demand for DEFA films after the initial euphoria of unification had been replaced by the realities of unemployment and rising prices. East German consumers reacted to these overwhelming changes with a return to familiar things, including DEFA films.

Daniela Berghahn's observation that, in 1999, "DEFA films have been ... difficult to access" (3), was not true anymore as many commercial outlets took note of the success of the films and began to stock shelves at East German branches of major consumer electronic stores. Now, Media Markt, Saturn Hansa, Makromarkt, and even the book club giant Bertelsmann, offered a selection of the most popular DEFA films. The "DEFA classics," as they were soon to be known, consisted of the DEFA fairytales, anti-war films, *Indianerfilme*, and the DEFA sci-fi adventures. When the internet became a popular sales medium, the online merchants Weltbild and Amazon started selling an

assortment of DEFA films. A search of the term “DEFA” on Weltbild’s webpage, for example, offers ten *Indianerfilme* and three “classics”: Nackt unter Wölfen, Karbid und Sauerampfer and Heißer Sommer (Weltbild). The same search on Amazon’s page brings up 62 results (Amazon.de).

Extensive trading of DEFA films in East and West is taking place on the internet auction and trading platform E-Bay. At any given point, more than 300 copies of DEFA films offered by commercial and private sellers are available on E-Bay Germany’s site (“EBay: DVD, Filme”). An estimated 20 to 30 DEFA films are sold per day on E-Bay. Although comparable numbers for other films are not available, these numbers suggest a high demand for the films. And more DEFA titles are being released by Icestorm every year. The 2004 release of the film Die Schönste, a banned film that was remade and banned again, has proven that new, attractive titles made available to the public for the first time will ensure the continuous success of DEFA films (Kirst).

The internet made DEFA films available to all Germans. West Germans unaware of the DEFA acknowledged the existence of the GDR through the presence of DEFA films, while East Germans rediscovered films from their past. These occasional discoveries indicate a significant movement towards the integration of DEFA films into a canon of German cinema.

DEFA FILM ON THE BIG SCREEN

The fall of the Wall in 1989 complicated the market situation for DEFA films. Audiences took advantage of their new freedoms and opted for the more attractive entertainment alternatives in the West. DEFA films competed with Hollywood blockbusters, the quota for DEFA films in movie theaters was abandoned, and the

association of the DEFA with the totalitarian regime continued to resonate with GDR citizens. Many DEFA theaters were privatized and sold to large companies that turned them into modern multiplex theaters, serving the popular demand for mainstream entertainment right after unification.

These changes coincided with a major overhaul of movie theaters in West Germany. German movie theaters had changed drastically in size and quality since the 1960s. The advent of television, the poor quality of German film, which “invited a major revolt during the later 1960s by the younger generation of film-makers,” (Manvell and Fraenkel 124) and the uninviting appearance of many movie theaters caused a decline in attendance and thus the closure of many theaters after the crisis of German film (146). TV “programming [was] the criterion used for deciding whether or not to go to the movies on a given evening” (Bisky 39), and often poor picture and sound quality (due to obsolescent or obsolete equipment), uncomfortable seating, and high ticket prices kept audiences away (Gregor 309).

The arrival of multiplexes changed the situation significantly. Since the 1990s, multiplex theaters have replaced the outdated movie houses in East and West Germany, adding more comfort, quality, and film selection. The definition of a multiplex theater remains blurred. German film expert Rolf Bähr describes multiplex theaters as “Großkinos, d.h. komfortable Komplexe in Groß- und Mittelstädten oder an ihren Stadträndern mit aufregenden Concessions- und Verkaufsgeschäften.“ (“Multiplex” 1) However, at least eight screens with stadium seating, high-technology projectors supporting various formats, sound systems using Dolby Digital and THX, ample parking, restaurants, and other facilities, are commonly used as the main criteria for a multiplex theater (59). From 1993 to 1997, the number of screens grew by 18%, and attendance increased by 10.5% (Neckermann 45). Stadium seating became a standard along with

crisp pictures and superb surround sound systems. At the same time, ticket prices dropped, and going to the movies once again became a popular form of leisure time activity among Germans.

Currently, six companies dominate the multiplexes and the mainstream film market. The Kieft group owns 91 multiplexes in Germany under its brands Cinestar and Village Cinemas ("CS in Zahlen"), Flebbe owns 36 Cinemaxx multiplexes ("Unternehmensprofil"), Cineplex 15 ("Impressum") and UCI Kinowelt 19 ("Ueber uns"). Some independent multiplex theaters, as the Berlin Alhambra, the Cinecitta in Nuremberg, or the Cineworld in Würzburg, introduced the multiplex experience to smaller urban and regional areas not covered by the major chains. Almost all multiplex theaters limit their offerings to large Hollywood blockbusters. The main objective behind the multiplex is to present a complete entertainment package for a large audience. Depending on the number of screens at a multiplex, many films are screened simultaneously, catering to a diverse audience. Instead of one single film, the audience can select from a variety of genres to fulfill each individuals' desire for entertainment. A multiplex also offers alternatives in case a popular film has sold out, or may even start a very popular film on more than one screen. Digital equipment and modern projectors allow one copy to be shown on various screens at different starting times in one multiplex theater.

Independent productions, films for cineastes, and older films such as DEFA films are rarely shown in multiplex theaters. In order to run the multiplex efficiently and profitably, the films have to be chosen for their popular appeal. Only films likely to attract a large audience will be selected for the bigger screens of a multiplex. Many Hollywood films incorporate sophisticated special visual effects and surround-sound, taking advantage of the state-of-the art equipment at multiplex theaters. Only Hollywood

productions, filmed with a potentially large attendance in mind, can draw audiences large enough to cover the immense investment associated with each film.

A look at the film screenings of Berlin multiplexes in the period from August 2004 to May 2005 revealed exactly one screening of a DEFA film.⁵⁷ The UFA multiplex Kosmos in Berlin-Friedrichshain – the first DEFA Theater built in the GDR (Hänsel 27) – showed Kurt Maetzig's film Die Buntkarierten (1949) in cooperation with the East German non-profit organization *Volkssolidarität*. The audience of approximately 20 people came from a local retirement home that had organized an outing for its senior citizens to the theater, offering free coffee and cake along with discounted tickets. This screening hardly covered the rental cost for the film and was only made possible with the financial support of the *Volkssolidarität*.⁵⁸

DEFA films are typically screened at smaller cinemas that often have a mandate for providing cultural entertainment to a select audience. The two common forms of such small movie theaters in Germany are the *Kommunales Kino* and the *Programmkino*. Often, these theaters screen films only once, and hardly ever to a full house (Simonis 92-3). Both types of movie theaters started in the Federal Republic, since the state-controlled film industry in the GDR did not distinguish between commercial and non-commercial screening of films (Arbeitsgruppe für Kommunale Filmarbeit 15). After 1990, both forms of non-commercial theater were introduced to East Germany as an alternative to the multiplex theaters. Some former DEFA movie theaters, for example the Kino Babylon in Berlin, transformed into *Kommunale Kinos* (Miethke).

⁵⁷ Exceptions were screenings of children's films in the series *Spatzenkino*. This non-violent film series in Berlin shows films for children and their parents at reduced prices.

⁵⁸ Based on my own estimate. A ticket costs approximately €5-6, resulting in a total gain of €100-120. Renting a film from Progress costs – according to their office – about the same amount. This does not yet include the cost for free coffee and cake.

The first *Kommunales Kino*, a co-operative cinema supported by tax revenues, opened in Frankfurt in 1971. Begun as a corrective to the commercialization of movie theaters, the slow demise of many small cinema houses, and the desire to offer films aimed at a critical audience in the wake of the New German Cinema, the co-operative cinema evolved into a location for non-commercial film screenings. The systematic work with the medium of film, as a form of art and as an expression of a culture, provided the public with the chance for a critical view of film (Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film 228). Cinema had become a carrier of cultural values, as Hilmar Hoffmann summarizes: “Im Kommunalen Kino gehörte daher die extensive Beschäftigung mit den Ergebnissen der Filmsemiotik zum Kino-Curriculum“ (272).

Similar in their film selection, but often with a more commercial slant, are the *Programmkinos*. According to one study, more than 90% of these movie theaters are located in university cities or cities with more than 200,000 residents. The core audience of *Programmkinos* are students (Neckermann and Trotz 17). Owned and operated by private parties, *Programmkinos* sometimes receive small support from communities for their cultural work. A *Programmkino* may be independent; for example, the Kino Arsenal in Berlin is supported by the *Freunde der Deutschen Kinemathek*. It may also be a part of a museum, like the the Zeughauskino in the Deutsches Historisches Museum (Worthmann) and the Filmmuseum Potsdam with its movie theater, or privately owned, like the Kino Blow-Up. The films they screen are often an eclectic mix of older films and new releases that do not always find their way onto the screens of the large multiplex theater (Miethke). Many *Programmkinos* in Berlin and East Germany also offer DEFA films as part of their monthly fare. The density of *Programmkinos* in Berlin accounts for a large share of DEFA films screened in the Federal Republic, while West German cinemas focus on older West German productions.

One of the Berlin movie theaters that frequently show DEFA films is the Kino Babylon. This historic theater was the only theater in Berlin funded exclusively by the city since 1929. Kino Babylon was the theater for new DEFA releases until the newly built DEFA cinemas, International and Kosmos, replaced the Babylon as a location for film premieres. After unification, the city of Berlin decided to preserve the historic character of the movie theater and turned it into a *Kommunales Kino* supported by the Berlin Senate. The film selection changed after this transformation, but many DEFA films were still screened on a regular basis. The Babylon continued to include DEFA films in retrospectives, *Werkschauen* or selected works of DEFA directors, and series about genres such as the anti-war film. It also showed DEFA documentaries in its regular program (Worthmann). In 2004, Berlin's financial troubles forced cuts in the support of cultural events. The Babylon lost its funding and was forced to close its doors for a month. A public protest ensued, and the theater re-opened and continued its program. The protest included lists circulated at various locations in Berlin and Potsdam, including the movie theater itself, the Berlin and Potsdam universities, and the film school at Babelsberg. The newspaper *Neues Deutschland* offered free advertising space to prominent filmmakers who wanted to write letters in support of the Babylon. Other newspapers, as well as the local and regional TV stations Fernsehen aus Berlin (FAB), RBB, and TV Berlin, reported the closure in their news.

Had the Babylon been permanently closed, the only *Kommunales Kino* with an emphasis on DEFA films and Eastern European films would have disappeared. Its historic legacy and fame as the best-known movie theater in Berlin, its proximity to Alexanderplatz and the Volksbühne as well as the bustling Prenzlauer Berg, and the frequent screenings of DEFA films, continues to attract diverse audiences of East and West Germans. The screenings of DEFA films has introduced many West Germans to

classics of German cinema that they had never seen, or been able to see, in the West. In fact, some West Germans inadvertently ended up at a DEFA film screening and were surprised about the quality of DEFA films. East Germans, on the other hand, came deliberately to watch old DEFA films they were already familiar with, or to see DEFA films that were banned, contested, or rarely screened at movie theaters.

One location famous for its DEFA films was the storied Börse. The small theater seated 66 people and played only DEFA films, establishing itself as a niche theater. The Börse was owned by DEFA's distribution company Progress and was used as a preview location for unedited DEFA films. In 1992, it opened to the public and became a well-known place in Berlin for eleven years. For a few years in the early 1990s, the Börse was one of the few places to see DEFA films; other movie theaters did not add DEFA films to their program until late in the 1990s. The Börse was a popular gathering place for film enthusiasts, people looking for memories, and a locus of GDR nostalgia (Decker "Verliebt"; "Filmbörse im Kino Blow-Up"). After the DEFA Stiftung sold the building that housed the Börse, the theater closed forever in 2003.

With an attractive line-up of DEFA classics, unknown and censored DEFA films, children's films and fairytales, and the constantly sold-out Saturday night reruns of Die Legende von Paul und Paula, the success of the Börse proved the value of DEFA films for German film history (Decker "Könige"). The Börse became an East German cultural island that celebrated the achievements of DEFA film by manifesting them visibly in the new environment of German film after unification. Whereas other parts of GDR culture in the years after unification were not popular and often disappeared in favor of West German products, the DEFA films at the Börse continued to remind East and West Germans of their divided past. The Börse and its DEFA films reminded audiences of the GDR's culture. Its exclusive focus on DEFA films created a valuable niche for the

audience and offered a space devoted exclusively to memories of and about the GDR. This alternative space for East German memories disappeared with the closure of the theater and left a void; there was no alternative to the Börse. The closure of the Börse not only relegated DEFA films to occasional screenings of classics in other movie theaters or on television, it also displaced the community of DEFA film enthusiasts. Moreover, the end of a niche movie theater such as the Börse meant the loss of a physical location for memories.

Similar to a museum, the movie theater housed “exhibits” of GDR culture, the DEFA films, and offered visual representations of everyday life in the GDR. However, it is not only the exhibit itself that causes the commemoration of a historical event; the viewers of the exhibit interpret the artifacts and relate them to their personal lives. They contrast their memories with the artifacts on display and position their personal memories in relation to the events that have been selected for the exhibit. In other words, viewers relate to the films by referring to events from their past that are brought back to their attention through the screenings of the films. By closing the theater, the viewers were stripped of this possibility to return to their memories. Likewise, the drastic reduction of DEFA films in Berlin after the closure of the Börse resulted in a decline of collective East German memory as well.

Despite the loss of the Börse as an East German cultural icon, DEFA films were still present at other Berlin *Programmkinos*. Four movie theaters, Babylon, Arsenal, Zeughauskino and Blow-Up, play DEFA films regularly. The Blow-Up is a comparatively new institution among Berlin movie theaters. Adjacent to the new offices of Progress, the first Blow-Up was opened in a former GDR hat-making factory in 1995. When Progress moved its offices next to the old theater, they helped to reopen it by supplying DEFA films. Similar to the Börse, the Blow-Up emphasizes DEFA films.

Even the formerly popular Saturday night screening of Die Legende von Paul und Paula was successfully revived and continued to attract large audiences week after week.

The proximity to the offices of Progress – the film distributor and the movie theater are housed in adjacent buildings in Berlin’s trendy district Prenzlauer Berg – and Progress’s support of the theater influenced the selection of films from the beginning. The Blow-Up replaced the Börse as the place to go for DEFA films, and is officially known as the “Partnerkino des Progress-Filmverleihs” (Blow Up Kino). The theater adapted and developed the concept of the Börse further, creating an East German movie theater. The smaller of its two screens was reserved for DEFA films, new productions by East German directors, and current films that deal with everyday life and culture of the GDR. The Blow-Up offered a meeting point for people interested in the culture and history of the GDR without neglecting the legacy of DEFA film as a component of GDR history. Banned DEFA films now play alongside DEFA classics, and documentaries such as the Kinder von Golzow project are screened along with former SED propaganda films and features like the infamous Thälmann films.

The Blow-Up promotes a critical debate about the history of everyday GDR culture through its repositioning of some DEFA films. Instead of isolating or banning DEFA films with blatant or clandestine propagandistic socialist messages, these films are included in the canon of East German Cinema to illustrate the diversity of DEFA film. At the same time, the coverage of the entire spectrum of filmmaking, from the immediate postwar time up to the late films of the DEFA and their continuation in the recent films of East German directors, illustrates the Blow-Up’s commitment to create a space for DEFA films.

Further, the Blow-Up has renewed the legacy of the Börse and adapted to the changes in German society by putting the DEFA films in a diachronic framework as films

contextualizing the former GDR. Other than the conventional approach of other movie theaters that show DEFA films within the synchronic context of genres – as for example using Jakob der Lügner as a representative film about the Holocaust – the Blow-Up employed a new methodology in its concept of the regional East German film (Winkler “Gojko Mitic”). As part of regional East German film, the DEFA film, in all its manifestations, has now been integrated into the landscape of German film after 1990.

Some DEFA films are screened within the context of film clubs. These clubs are institutions unique to the GDR and now to East Germany. A film club often focuses on small productions, independent films, documentaries, and critical films without mass appeal. Often, film clubs do not have a room or technical equipment of their own. They live off the enthusiasm of volunteers who determine the selection of films, take care of the infrastructure such as a room, projection equipment, and tickets (Dümcke 25). The membership fees and proceeds from ticket sales are used to cover operational costs, and to repair and replace old equipment.

Film clubs in the GDR were usually based at youth clubs, universities, or other private institutions. While the first two types of film clubs limited their screenings to a select circle (fellow students, members of the youth club), offered films on a casual, infrequent basis, and often claimed educational purposes to get a waiver for screening fees, other film clubs were independent clubs. The latter were also established clubs with a good infrastructure, a core of organizers, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly screenings, and screenings open to the general public. They advertised in local papers, displayed announcements in stores and prominent public areas, sold tickets at the door, and occasionally invited experts and guests to the screenings. Sometimes, the larger, established clubs even received public funding for their cultural work, which helped to cover the rental fees film distributors charge for the screening of a film.

While film clubs existed in the Federal Republic as well as in the German Democratic Republic, some important differences in their respective structures, their sociological roles, and their film selection can be discerned. The history of the film clubs in the Federal Republic began in 1949 with the foundation of the *Verband der deutschen Filmclubs e.V.* These clubs were based on the models of the French *Ciné-Clubs* and the British *Film Societies* and fulfilled two functions: getting Germans acquainted with the art of film and teaching democratic methods of cultural work. According to the film club experts Wieland Becker and Volker Petzold, Berlin, Munich, and Hamburg hosted the first film clubs in 1946 and 1947. Other cities followed suit, and on May 7, 1949, the *Verband der deutschen Filmclubs e.V.* was founded in Hamburg, incorporating clubs from the French, British, and American occupation zones.

From the beginning, film clubs offered alternatives to the average film in theaters. The clubs screened film classics from the Weimar Republic, international films in their original language, and films from the GDR. The latter became the trademark of West German film clubs during the Cold War, when films from the Eastern Bloc, and especially the GDR, were censored. Between October 1963 and December 1964, 100 screenings with DEFA films took place in West German film clubs, averaging 400 people per showing. Four DEFA film series were established at West German universities, and eight discussions about DEFA films occurred at West German organizations (Becker and Petzold 145). Special screenings for DEFA films had to be permitted by the government. In a few of the clubs, it was possible to engage in a critical discussion of DEFA films, as an article by film club member Karl-Otto Gebert illustrates: “Im Rahmen einer Vorstellung des Düsseldorfer Filmclubs [...] erlebte der 1946 in Berlin uraufgeführte DEFA-Film Die Mörder sind unter uns seine Erstaufführung in der britischen

Besatzungszone Deutschlands. Wenige Tage später fand [...] ein außerordentlich stark besuchter Diskussionsabend über diesen Film statt“ (2126-8).

In the late 1960s, the West German film clubs declined rapidly in popularity. The rise of television, along with growing competition from *Programmkinos*, the difficulties with obtaining quality films at modest prices due to the lack of a centralized federal film archive, and cuts in federal subsidies, caused the *Verband der deutschen Filmclubs e.V.* to disband on 31 December 1970 (192-7). The decline of the film clubs also caused a decrease in the number of DEFA film imports in the Federal Republic. Without the powerful lobby work of the federation and the financial support of the government, individual film clubs often refrained from complicated screening applications and offered films to their members that were easier to obtain than DEFA films.

Film clubs in the GDR took a different direction than their counterparts in the FRG. The first film clubs in the GDR were founded in the 1950s, at a time when the GDR had been already established its structure as a centralized state with a monolithic, party-accredited culture. The film club movement was, as Cornelia Dümcke states, “ein Spiegel der (kultur-)politischen Geschichte der DDR und deren Kulturverständnis” (25-6). Although many clubs were founded through the initiative of single persons and not through official decrees, as was already common in the GDR, they were not allowed to be founded or exist autonomously. Becker and Petzold point out that, unlike other socialist countries, the GDR did not succeed in the formation of a central federation of film clubs. Instead, the clubs were required to join one of the mass organizations, such as the Freie Deutsche Jugend, the Freie Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, the Kulturbund, or even the local and regional movie houses, to host the clubs and support them financially (19). Conflicts, such as those between movie theaters and the film clubs, were

unavoidable, and, in contrast to the socio-critical role of film clubs in the FRG, clubs in the East were in permanent danger of becoming the instruments of party politics.

The first “provisional” committee, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Filmclubs*, was founded on 7 December 1963 (Becker 32). Up to this point, single groups and clubs offered screenings and discussions of recent films. They needed permission for each single film to be screened, since no list of acceptable films had been created yet. Many clubs submitted requests for films that were not screened in movie theaters due to their political content, but these films could be shown to small groups and followed by a critical discussion. Renowned films from the Weimar Republic, such as Fritz Lang’s Metropolis, could be shown, although these films were not permitted in movie theaters dedicated to the “progressive,” socialist film. After the Eleventh Plenary Meeting of the ZK in 1965, when almost the entire annual production of DEFA films was banned (Berghahn 140), film clubs were to be integrated in the work of the art house theaters (*Filmkunsttheater*). In addition to the large GDR movie theaters, the smaller theaters offered critical and foreign films, often in the original language, and invited guests for discussions after the screenings. The archival German films from previous decades filled the gaps that had existed in the landscape of GDR movie theaters up to this point.

Film clubs in the GDR offered not only the screenings of archival and current films from Eastern European Countries for film fans, but also engaged in discussions about the daily life in the GDR as well: “Die Diskussionen waren höchst aufregend [...] und biegen dann plötzlich zu ganz anderen Themen, das ging dann einmal bis zur Frage, warum es kein Klopapier gibt” (Becker 121). Within the context of club work, GDR citizens expressed their political opinions, criticized the shortcomings in their society, and exercised political decision-making through the medium of film. Utilizing the plot of the films as a point of departure, the realities of life entered debates about artistic work

and redefined the film clubs as places of democratic and free expression, at least until the cultural changes enforced after the Eleventh Plenary Meeting altered the cultural life in the GDR (Agde).

While the official theaters struggled to meet the attendance quotas required by the planned economy, more often than not using imported films from non-Socialist countries to catch the attention of viewers, artistic and exigent DEFA films were relegated to occasional screenings. As Becker and Petzold point out, this situation created paradisiacal situations for ambitious film clubs in the first half of the 1970s: the lack of public screenings for these DEFA films enabled the clubs to present films as novelties to their audiences (203). Film clubs based at universities and technical colleges capitalized on this opportunity. Dealing with the reality of cultural politics in the GDR under the auspices of the SED, many clubs screened critical films and followed these up with discussions about conflicts in politics, society and culture, both on the levels of the everyday and the ruling power (209).

Overall, the film clubs slowly turned into places of – at least inner – resistance. The screenings of ideologically “difficult” films often turned into a forum for political opposition. Many critical DEFA filmmakers valued these opportunities for open discussion and honest evaluation of their films. They found an audience that was interested in films concerned with the reality of life in the GDR, the problems confronting socialist society, and the attempts to depict these tribulations on film. Evidently, the success of film clubs and their slowly rising autonomy created a sub-culture of dissent against the party-governed society, which led to changes in the structure of film clubs in the GDR.

The slow transformation in the GDR of the 1980s from dissent, which “refers simply to a more dilute form of conscious political deviance,” to opposition, or “social

protest ... political dissent ... and ... mass protest” is mirrored in the acceptance of film clubs in these years (Ross 111-2). Many clubs no longer appealed to their audiences when they retreated into niches of GDR society that remained untouched by the GDR government. On the other side, many clubs remained faithful to their agenda of critical films and offered their audience a critical program outside of the mainstream. Some of the unscreened DEFA films that had received a category 2 classification, “Erhalt der Möglichkeit nichtöffentlicher Aufführung” (Becker 439) were screened by clubs. Some of the best DEFA films not to be screened to the general public were Der Fall Gleiwitz (Gerhard Klein, 1961) and Fünf Patronenhülsen (Frank Beyer, 1962), as well as new films such as Till Eulenspiegel (Rainer Simon, 1975), Ikarus (Heiner Carow, 1975), and Der Verlorene Engel (Ralf Engel, 1966).

With unification came the introduction of the West German *Kommunale Kino* as a vehicle of cultural production. Financial difficulties and the new competition of movie theaters endangered many film clubs and forced them to redefine their conceptual approach. Their new agenda treated film as culture, as an antagonist to commercial cinema, and depicted film as an art that could present artistic values to the audience. The new clubs still strove to assume social responsibility and offer a space for communication regarding political and social questions, as well as problems or conflicts of the individual in and with society (Becker 379).

Film clubs are still active in Germany and have retained their original character as communal meeting and discussion places. A good example for the work of a film club is the film club *Kleines Kino* in the East German border town of Frankfurt an der Oder. It was founded in 1993 with a focus on Eastern European Cinema and started with ten films in its first year (Dümcke 54). In the meantime, its focus has shifted towards film series with overarching topics and regional film nights. The number of films has increased as

well, up to approximately 50 films (Kleines Kino). One of the topics in the fall of 2004 was the monthly series “Forbidden/ Forgotten Films of the DEFA” (“Förderung 2004”), showing Hermann Zschoches film about a young teacher Karla (1965), and Egon Günther’s film Wenn du groß bist, lieber Adam (1965).

The screenings of both DEFA films at the club were a huge success. Usually, the average attendance at the film club’s weekly screening amounted to 20-25 people. However, at the screenings of the two DEFA films, which I attended in October and November 2004, more than 180 people came to see the banned films, making these screenings the most successful evenings of the film club Kleines Kino (Kleines Kino).⁵⁹ Two reasons seem to account for the unexpected success: first, the screening of a DEFA film usually not available on TV or in a movie theater attracted a more diverse audience than usual. Second, the chance to meet friends and former colleagues, and the opportunity to share memories about the GDR past in a discussion connected to the film, attracted this large audience.

Another location for the viewing of DEFA films are film festivals. Although one would not necessarily expect DEFA films to be audience magnets, the success of the films at the annual Berlin *Museumsinselfestival* has proven skeptics wrong. Organized by the Staatliche Museen Berlin, the festival has expanded from year to year and is deemed the “longest open air festival of the world” (Museumsinselfestival 2004). It offers concerts, theater, public readings, performance art, and open-air cinema on big screens. Among contemporary European and American films, popular DEFA films as Solo Sunny (Konrad Wolf, 1980) and Die Legende von Paul und Paula (Heiner Carow, 1973) were scheduled to be shown outdoors during the 2004 season. The DEFA cult musical Heißer Sommer (Joachim Hasler, 1968) in July, and Konrad Wolf’s anti-war film

⁵⁹ Many of the viewers participated in a field study about the current reception of DEFA films. The following chapter explains the results of this study.

Ich war neunzehn (1968) in August were the three DEFA films at this year's festival (Museumsinsselfestival 2005). While the addition of only one DEFA film in comparison to the previous year may not seem an extraordinary expansion, it is significant that DEFA films have established themselves as part of this festival. It is likely that positive feedback from an enthusiastic audience and good ticket sales in the previous years contributed to an extended offer of DEFA films.

DEFA film has found a home in the Kommunales Kino, the Programmkino and the film clubs. More important than the films being established on the big screen is the notion that DEFA films are no longer "dismissed either as political propaganda or as depictions of drab socialist life, devoid of glamour or entertainment value" (Berghahn 3). The films are accepted as symbols of East German history that show audiences a past which was previously unknown to many West Germans, thereby contributing to a better understanding between East and West.

DEFA FILM REVIEWS IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRESS

Almost 15 years after the last DEFA film was completed, film reviews in newspapers about DEFA films continue to be rare. Most print media focus on reviews of recent releases, but after the DEFA closed its doors in 1992, no new DEFA productions entered the market. Only major DEFA anniversaries create some public recognition, but even releases of older DEFA films receive virtually no press. The 2004 release of the banned DEFA film Fräulein Schmetterling (Kurt Barthel, 1966), in the original and the corrected version, went largely unnoticed by the press.

The GDR print media that formerly reviewed of DEFA films has disappeared as well. The Publications to review DEFA film – however ideologically influenced and propagandistic these reviews may have been – were Film und Fernsehen, which survived

German unification but ceased to be published in 1999, along with Deutsche Filmkunst (1953-62), Neue Film-Welt, renamed Film-Spiegel in 1954, and Treffpunkt Kino, which was known as Film heute und morgen before 1969 (Berghahn 24).

Heinz Kersten's reviews were less dogmatic in their approach. Kersten was an expert for DEFA films in the Federal Republic who wrote favorably about the post-war film culture in the Soviet Zone (Drawer). Especially during the time of the Cold War, these reviews were important documents for West Germans, since import and screenings of DEFA films in the Federal Republic were either forbidden or limited by import restrictions.⁶⁰ Even East Germans read Kersten's reviews to receive an objective account of a DEFA film.

Since the end of the DEFA, publications such as the DEFA yearbooks released by the DEFA-Stiftung continue to publish articles about DEFA films. Films broadcast on national television may be reviewed in television guides with a brief synopsis of the plot. Film clubs and *Programmkinos* circulate advertisements and monthly listings, either in printed format or as email-based newsletters.⁶¹ Printed city magazines are also one of the more widely accessible sources for the general public. Aside from these sources, public accounts of DEFA films in the print media are absent.

One example of a printed city magazine is the bi-weekly magazine *Zitty* for the region Berlin and Potsdam.⁶² It contains articles about life in Berlin, lists events, and

⁶⁰ Until 1949, DEFA films and West German films were simply exchanged: DEFA films played successfully in the West. At the first height of the Cold War in 1950, the import of DEFA films was entirely restricted until 1954. Afterwards DEFA films made it to the West only sporadically via film clubs. The fairytales were successful in the West because they were apolitical in their message and therefore not in danger to carry communist propaganda. Each fairytale was also produced with the same amount of money as any other DEFA film. Thus, it was possible to plan the films carefully and produce them with the same effects other films would receive.

⁶¹ Progress Filmverleih offers its infrastructure to send electronic newsletters with the film listings of the movie theater. In Berlin, at least the Kino Arsenal and the Kino Blow-Up use this service to inform about upcoming films and events.

⁶² A second magazine in Berlin is TIP. Similar magazines exist in virtually every German city.

provides starting times for plays, movie theaters, and cable channels in Berlin and Potsdam. On the political spectrum, the magazine *Zitty* could be classified as moderate-left to left. It is tailored towards young people between 20 and 45 “with a critical attitude, an active social life and who enjoy going out” (Schwarz). I looked for mention of DEFA films in 19 issues of *Zitty*, particularly the copies 18/04 to 10/05 covering the time span between 19 August 2004 and 11 May 2005, to understand how DEFA films are received in the contemporary German print media, and contacted the editor in charge of *Zitty*’s film department, Martin Schwarz, to inquire about the self-understanding of *Zitty*, the personnel of the film department and their qualifications to write educated reviews about DEFA films, as well as the criteria applied by his to determine the films to be discussed and reviewed in detail.

The magazine has seven categories that mention DEFA films. First, the “Tip of the Day” (*Tagestipps*) separates the television highlights of each day and gives a brief synopsis of the film. The second category is a daily listing of the television programs separated by channels. A third category contains feature films that are listed by movie theaters and also alphabetically. Furthermore, there is the “Tip of the Day” for all movie theaters and a category called “Shortcuts” that focuses on films under a major topic. The category “Exit” finally integrates films into a larger overall cultural context.

Of 266 possible television “Tips of the Day”, only three were DEFA films: Vergeßt mir meine Traudel nicht (Kurt Maetzig, 1957), Die Mörder sind unter uns (Wolfgang Staudte, 1946) and Die Legende von Paul und Paula (Heiner Carow, 1973). One of the nineteen “Exit” articles mentioned Spur der Steine (Frank Beyer, 1966), and four “Shortcuts” discussed DEFA films when they ran as parts of film festivals. By far the highest accumulation of DEFA films as “Tips of the Day” were featured in the section about films at movie theaters, where eleven of 266 tips contained DEFA films.

Film reviews are determined by the quality of the film compared to all other films shown over the course of the magazine's 14-day coverage. According to Schwarz, *Zitty* does not base its selection on regional or political criteria because the former division of Germany into East and West Germans does not exist anymore in the age group of *Zitty* readers. The film department under Schwarz and the television department under Lutz Göllner discuss the upcoming issue with two free-lance writers – at the moment Michael May and Steffi Grimm – in their meetings, and try to represent the range of films in their “Tips of the Day.” As Schwarz pointed out, all four members of the committee are from the West and are experts of cinema. Three additional writers, DEFA film expert Jan Gypmel, Manfred Hobsch, co-founder of *Zitty*, and East German consultant for DEFA film Dirk Pilz, contribute to the film and television section of *Zitty*.

The number and selection of DEFA films in an issue of *Zitty* is determined by the number of DEFA films screened in Berlin. Most of the DEFA films featured in the “Tip of the Day” are shown at the Blow-Up. Excluded from this category are the weekly screening of the DEFA cult film Die Legende von Paul und Paula at the Blow-Up Theater, and propagandistic DEFA films not of interest for *Zitty*'s target group. In Schwarz' opinion, the latter would not merit mention as film of the day. In the case of other DEFA films, the two experts Jan Gypmel and Dirk Pilz make recommendations and point out the hidden DEFA classics that deserve a closer review. One example of the critics' expertise is their review of the DEFA comedy Geliebte weiße Maus (Gottfried Kolditz, 1964); the film is valued among experts of DEFA film as a secret gem of DEFA film and was proposed for review by the West German Jan Gypmel.

The approach *Zitty* takes when reviewing DEFA films suggests that the films have a universal value for all Germans. The reviewers select the best films from a pool of a 14-day period and assess their significance for cineastes. Especially important in this

selection process is the fact that West German reviewers make the films accessible to audiences with their unprejudiced reviews. They emphasize the special character of DEFA films when they interpret them as necessary elements of German film history. The critiques also point out the stylistic qualities and the role of the films in GDR society. At the same time, they provide introductions of the films to contemporary viewers, and thus help audiences who are not familiar with DEFA cinema to learn about the less known half of divided German cinema.

Another perspective on DEFA film reviews is published in the East German tabloid *SuperIllu*, which celebrates the films as products of an East German heritage. *SuperIllu* is a part of the international Hubert Burda Media group. According to its philosophy, the tabloid reports “not about, but for East Germans,” and hopes simultaneously to “be an aid in the unification of East and West Germany” (“Steckbrief”). It reaches 3 million East German readers per week and sells virtually all of its issues in the East. *SuperIllu* defines itself as a medium predominantly for the East German population and selects topics of interest for many East Germans. They report on the shared GDR past, reports about former GDR stars, and about prominent East Germans in politics and entertainment. Even the add-ons to the magazine and free gifts are customized to address East Germans. Beginning with the first September issue of 2005, *SuperIllu* added the series “12 DEFA films that made history” on DVD to their magazine once a month. For an additional €2, subscribers could acquire the magazine with a DVD and own the twelve best DEFA films after one year.

It is precisely this correlation of DEFA films and the magazine as exclusively East German cultural products that puts the films into a problematic position. I propose here that the films are appropriated by *SuperIllu* to emphasize the identity of its readers as citizens of the former GDR. Although the magazine lends a voice to an East German

legacy that was suppressed after unification by the domination of West German culture, it is obvious that the placement of DEFA films in *SuperIllu* does not encourage a dialogue between East and West Germans. On the contrary, the films are marketed as symbols of a national East German pride that is deliberately independent of West Germany. The interpretation of the films as depictions of life from an East German perspective does not take the larger German picture into consideration, thereby contradicting the magazine's mission to help West Germans to understand East Germans. West Germans thus tend to ignore *SuperIllu*, which makes the magazine essentially unsuitable for mutual acceptance. Consequently, the films appear to be an exclusive visual reminder of the past without relevance for West Germans. They evoke a nostalgic sensation among the readers of the magazine and celebrate GDR achievements by placing them within a new East German society constructed in *SuperIllu*. Due to the magazine's limited readership, the addition of the DVDs with DEFA films even suggests a perseverance of stereotypes that reduces the films to a political statement about the GDR as a "clear-cut reality with a single, unambiguous political message for the future" (Ross 202).

As different as both publications may be in their approach to DEFA films, one fact is clear: DEFA cinema is alive on and off the screen. To some, the films symbolize the struggle for history and the memories from previous decades, while others see in them the missing complement to German film history, and to a third group DEFA films are the predecessors of a trend in contemporary German film to contextualize Germany's divided history and the attempts of East and West to understand each other better.⁶³

⁶³ In addition to the omnipresent *Good Bye Lenin* and *Sonnenallee*, the comedy *Kleinruppin Forever* (Karsten Fiebler, 2004) and the drama *Halbe Treppe* (Andreas Dresen, 2002) are excellent examples of this topic in German film.

CONCLUSION

Although the presence of DEFA films in post-unification Germany has grown over the past years with the successful implementation of DEFA films as East German tradition in the German media landscape, this chapter shows that films are still regional entertainment. If not for the availability of these films on video and DVD, most West Germans would not be able to see DEFA films because they are not offered on the TV channels they receive. Of course, one can only speculate on audience data were the DEFA films actually offered on national TV, and it is likely that many Germans would not choose a DEFA film as their evening entertainment because of the film's historically distant plot line. In fact, it may be the case that, in the West, DEFA films are bound to remain the exclusive province of cineastes, despite the potential presented by the DVD market, because West Germans lack the background knowledge to understand many DEFA films in their entirety. Put bluntly, many West Germans are simply not interested in DEFA films because the films lack appeal. DEFA classics may be known to a good portion of West Germans, but for the most part, West Germans who grew up in divided Germany do not turn to the films because of disinterest in the history of the GDR. Does this mean that the films would be an exclusively East German tradition, symbolizing the social cohesion of an East German community (Hobsbawm 9)?

Perhaps not, as at the same time, new technologies on the TV market could enable broader dissemination of DEFA films. Nationwide access to the regional channels via digital receivers, and intelligent digital video recorders comparable to TiVo in the US market that select and record programs automatically for their users, already provide flexibility from broadcasting times and regional limitations. In the near future, a video-

on-demand or pay-per-view channel offering DEFA films around the clock would make access to the films easier.

Younger audiences with different viewing habits already approach DEFA films without the regional prejudice of their parents and rely on the films to learn about the “value systems and conventions of behavior” (Hobsbawm 9) that were a part of life in the GDR. In other words, they see the films as elements of a tradition, whereas older generations might watch the films for entirely different reasons. A “study of the history of society” (Hobsbawm 12) may help to understand the various roles DEFA films play in post-unification Germany, and to see how the transformation of DEFA films into a tradition influenced and assisted the current success of the films.

Chapter 4

Audiences of DEFA Films: Reception in Transition

“Society is much too powerful for it to tolerate any movies except those with which it is comfortable” (Siegfried Kracauer 292)

The transition of DEFA films from the official films of the GDR to symbols of East German identity has sparked considerable interest among audiences. Despite negative cultural attitudes toward DEFA films, the invention of a DEFA film tradition continues. As Hobsbawm writes, it is essential to critically examine a society in order to understand its history and its “need” for tradition (12). In the case of DEFA films, one must take into account not just one but three Germanys, and how each of them received the films in their unique way. This chapter contrasts three diverse audiences of DEFA films in the GDR, the Federal Republic before unification, and post-unification Germany, analyzing the changes that took place in each historical period before it was possible to invent a DEFA tradition.

It is interesting to observe that despite the diverse nature of the audiences, DEFA films seem to symbolize a “social cohesion” (9) through their shared culture. The reception of the films today tends to minimize their political connotations in the post-GDR environment; the films have become historical, or “traditional,” documents. Regardless of their origin, age, political preference, and birthplace, audiences are overwhelmingly interested in DEFA films as historical documents. To them, DEFA films are representations of the GDR past and symbolize this past in a new cultural environment, inventing a new tradition for the films that separates them from their original historical context and positions them as vehicles of East German identity.

Before I take a look at the current audience of DEFA films it seems useful to chart how audiences and DEFA films were linked throughout the decades of DEFA film from its beginning in 1946 up to the *Wende* in 1989 and after unification in 1990. Along with these changes, the audience of DEFA films adjusted to the new environment as well and transitioned with the films. To illustrate this transitional period I employ the results of my field study to show how and why Germans still watch DEFA films. Based on a set of questionnaires and interviews I conducted in Berlin, Dresden, and Frankfurt/Oder I suggest a typology of the present-day DEFA audience with respect to individual viewer types. The close examination of the film enthusiast – commonly known as film “fan,” and two internet fan sites as examples of a thriving DEFA fan culture conclude my study.

THE AUDIENCE OF DEFA FILMS IN THE GDR

When the first DEFA film Die Mörder sind unter uns opened in 1946, masses once again filled the movie theaters or what remained of them in the rubble. Robert Shandley points out that it is “hard to tell if the audiences were generated by the desire to see moralistic films about the recent German past or by the need to find a warm place to sit for a few hours” (24), but it is impossible to say exactly how many Germans attended the movie theaters on any given day. There are no statistics available, but one can assume that the prospect of a warm theater along with the hope to escape the grim reality of the devastated post-war Germany for these hours made the movies a popular place in the late 1940s.

This hope was mostly shattered for audiences of DEFA films. In their films, the directors of the new film company made clear that a sincere, thorough reflection of German guilt and an immediate re-education by means of films had to take place. From their very first film on, DEFA broke with the cinematic style of pre-National Socialist

Weimar entertainment cinema and replaced it with films promoting the studio's ideological socialist foundation. Initially, this strategy worked, and the first DEFA films were successful. However, as soon as other film companies commenced work in the three other occupation zones of Berlin, and Hollywood discovered the German market and began with the import of their own films to entertain the masses, DEFA features lost in popularity. Kurt Maetzig, DEFA pioneer, "understood full well ... the popular appeal of this type of cinema for the average cinema-goer" (Allan 6). DEFA's reflection of German reality in the rubble and the reminders of German guilt during Hitler's regime displeased the working-class audience of these films. "Audience research suggested that cinema-goers in the GDR were not happy" (8) and changes to the filmic output were proposed to bring the viewers back.

As DEFA films struggled for an audience it was obvious that DEFA officials might have overestimated the willingness of Germans to tackle their own immediate National Socialist past. Instead of the confrontation with the legacy of the Holocaust on film, Germans were seeking distraction and turned away from many DEFA films about these years (Mückenberger 70). Many traveled to the western sectors of Berlin to see the latest Hollywood films.

The foundation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949 and the development of DEFA as nationally-owned company in 1953 left their impact as well. Most films in the first half of the 1950s followed the doctrine of socialist realism to support the ideology of the state with the artistic output of the film studio. At this point, the average audience of a DEFA film consisted of work brigades, schools, and youth groups to manifest socialist ideas. Many DEFA films were "an incredible success, [and] the Thälmann films were seen by millions, often as part of official party events" (Hake 95). Hake's claim of an immense audience turnout at Maetzig's 1954 feature Ernst Thälmann

- Sohn seiner Klasse and the 1955 sequel Ernst Thälmann - Führer seiner Klasse confirms the link of cultural and political life in the GDR. More popular than the films celebrating the legends of communist struggle were the Berlin films of Gerhard Klein and Wolfgang Kohlhaase. At least partly due to their challenge of traditional patterns in East German filmmaking, Alarm im Zirkus (1954), Eine Berliner Romanze (1956), and Berlin Ecke Schönhauser (1957) attracted large audiences. Official discussions revolved around the critical realism as key feature in these films during the 1958 Film Conference organized by the Ministerium für Kultur in Berlin. Headed by Alexander Abusch, the ministry moved away from its liberal stance on filmmaking and demanded a return to films supporting the national ideology. Naturally, audiences were disappointed by the changes that “marked the beginning of a new period of stagnation and a stark decline in the popularity of DEFA films” (Allan 10).

The strained relationship between DEFA films, their East German audiences and the Hauptverwaltung Film within the Ministry of Culture that controlled the production and release of DEFA films became even more evident during 1965. During the Eleventh Plenary Meeting, the Central Committee of the SED dismissed the entire year’s production of DEFA films as irrelevant and detrimental to society. This act, condemned by former DEFA scenarist and director Wolfgang Kohlhaase as the politicians’ loss of “their sense of reality,” was “intended to impose some discipline on society.” The officials knew that the “lack of public discussion...led the public to seek answers in films” (Kohlhaase 123). Accordingly, prohibiting of the so-called *Kaninchenfilme*, the metonymical expression for the films of 1965 named after Maetzig’s banned feature Das Kaninchen bin ich, from public release deepened the aversion of audience towards DEFA films even further. Audiences assumed films dealing critically with life would be banned from public release, leaving only non-critical features pre-approved by the party. The

consequences for the audience were clear: the majority of East Germans turned away from DEFA films to seek distraction in Hollywood films or the new medium television. Although it is possible that “the history of the DEFA itself – its popularity and effectiveness within GDR society...would most definitely have been written very differently, had these films been distributed” (Kramer 133-4), the bans resulted in a “segmentation of film audiences into a large and predominantly young audience interested...in conventional entertainment; a smaller middle-class audience firmly committed to DEFA’s original political mission; and an even smaller group of artists, intellectuals and cinephiles fascinated by...the international New Waves” (Hake 126).

By and large, this audience trio continued for the final two decades of the DEFA and the GDR and has to some extent continued in Germany after unification. The older generations stayed at home in front of their television screens, while the audience of films at movie theaters consisted mostly of young people (Bisky). Films from the West were widely available since the 1970s to support the financially troubled domestic film industry and brought the most revenue (Meurer 284). The less popular DEFA films were still attended since “moviegoing offered an alternative to other group-oriented activities such as the obligatory FDJ (Freie Deutsche Jugend) events, and the films provided pleasures ignored by official culture and established high culture” (Hake 129) until the late 1980s. DEFA films aimed to entertain young people and looked at the everyday life in the GDR from the perspective of the youth. Along with the democratization efforts and the protest movement within the GDR, audiences began to dwindle even more although films addressed urgent, critical questions about the relation of GDR society and the individual. Films such as Evelyn Schmidt’s Das Fahrrad (1982) and Hermann Zschoche’s Insel der Schwäne (1983) illustrated a new phase in liberalization but failed to regain the audiences lost in the 1960s that now stayed away from DEFA films.

THE AUDIENCE OF DEFA FILMS DURING THE *WENDE*

Related to the rejection of the “drab and clumsy East German products that embodied socialism’s failure” (Berdahl, “(N)Ostalgie” 194) by East Germans, DEFA films shared a similar fate after the fall of the Wall 1989. Although DEFA films had been affected by declining audiences for two decades, the remaining film audiences in East German cinemas of 1990 moved even further away from now outdated films “packed with oblique references to the former GDR ... to be almost totally inaccessible to anyone not intimately versed in the cultural rhetoric of that state” (Allen 18-9) towards the new entertainment culture of big-budget Hollywood productions that were omnipresent in the movie theaters of the East. Regardless of this tendency immediately after the *Wende* to repudiate things associated with the GDR and to incorporate “none of the elements of the socialist system or the eastern German lifestyle” (Zelle 3), the public perception changed in the mid- 1990s. East German things became fashionable and sometimes more popular than during their time in the GDR. *Ostalgie* was the reaction of some East Germans to the reality of life in the Federal Republic. As I pointed out earlier, “a mixture of memories...and an emerging East German consciousness” along with a “profound notion of loss and the attempts to come to terms with it” (Blum “*Ostalgie*” 230) are explanations for a higher public demand of DEFA films on the screens of the movie theaters and television sets. Despite some notable exceptions⁶⁴ DEFA films never reached the popularity of other icons of *Ostalgie* as the distinctive East German cross light *Ampelmännchen*, *Rotkäppchen* champagne or *Vita Cola*. There are two reasons for

⁶⁴ Some of these exceptions are arguably the campy musical *Heißer Sommer* (1967) and the cult classic *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* (1973). The latter has been screened weekly for 14 straight years every Saturday night in Berlin and has become a cult film. See also chapter 3 about DEFA films in German movie theaters.

this lack of fame of DEFA films among East Germans. First, the DEFA still existed as independent company at the time of the first nostalgic movements, had not disappeared or been replaced by West German products, and did not appear to be endangered at this time. Second, the films were not easily marketable products of GDR culture. They occupied a hybrid position as part of the realms of official politics as well as representatives of everyday entertainment and artistic political resistance.

I demonstrated in chapter 2 how the DEFA Stiftung as one of six institutions responsible for the preservation of the DEFA legacy stands at the center of the efforts to promote DEFA films. The situation for DEFA films in Germany has changed significantly since Barton Byg cautioned in 1995 against too much enthusiasm about these institutions in the making and in transformation, when he pointed out that the “political and economic volatility of the GDR since 1989 warns us that any of these formations could be ephemeral” (Byg “Cinema of Former GDR” 162). In fact, the opposite seems to be the case as this study about audiences of DEFA films in the Federal Republic illustrates. After the foundation of the DEFA Stiftung was initially delayed, it came into existence in 1999 as the public entity in charge of DEFA films. It defined itself a coordinating organization that was able to promote DEFA films and manage their distribution, sales, and screenings in the Federal Republic.

THE AUDIENCE OF DEFA FILMS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Fifteen years after unification, audiences of DEFA films have changed. In contrast to the situation in the final decades of the GDR the number of DEFA film screenings is on the rise. Even the late DEFA films contextualizing the *Wende* have seen some public screen exposure. Whereas DEFA film audiences in the 1990s consisted of nostalgics and film enthusiasts, the “unification dramas and documentaries were often

ignored by the general public in the east, most of whom were tired of the DEFA tradition of the problem film and reminders of the failure of ‘Real Existing Socialism’“(Naughton 66). The situation of “cultural schizophrenia” (Corrigan 1) in West Germany after the Second World War when “the need to forget 20 years created a hole” (Dawson 7) resembled the new beginning after German unification. Once the excitement of the new setting was replaced by everyday tribulations, people tried to find consolation in familiar environments. They were faced with the disappearance of their old frame of reference that had vanished over the years to the “realm of memory and amnesia” (Berdahl World 232). DEFA films as both symbolic and substantial representations of the familiar have replaced the “real” GDR.

I am not suggesting that the sole incentive for audiences to consume DEFA films is nostalgia, which merely constructs an imagined idyllic past and avoids discussions of current problems (Stewart). Compared to the situation twenty years ago, the structure of audiences of DEFA films has shifted and expanded from a small fragment of the middle-class to a variety of cinema-goers. University students, retirees, housewives, teachers, and blue-collar workers alike can be found in audiences of DEFA films, and they all come to see the films for a variety of reasons. Movies at the theater used to be a pastime of cinephiles who took the advantage of seeing classic films that were not screened on the few TV channels. The same destiny of rare screenings of DEFA films on TV brought the variety of different groups together at the movie theater. Finally, the incentive to see a DEFA film has changed compared to Balla’s self-reflexive cinematic observation in Spur der Steine (1966) that, for a date with Kati, he “would even be willing to watch a DEFA film.” By now, audiences of DEFA films are no longer exclusively former citizens of the GDR. A whole new post-unification generation who was not born or does no longer remember the GDR is now taking part in the cultural life of the Federal Republic. To this

generation, DEFA films are a part of cinematic history, representing the generation of their parents and grandparents. Therefore I claim that audiences drawn to DEFA films attend these films for more universal reasons, which I labeled in categories of nostalgia, *Ostalgie*, history, stars, and entertainment.

CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCES OF DEFA FILMS

What I discovered based on the questionnaires and interviews I conducted was that DEFA audiences could be categorized in four classes according to the frequency of visiting DEFA films and the different motivations for their visits. Ranging from the accidental viewer dropping in and the casual viewer attending occasionally, there are also the interested viewers with a considerable awareness of DEFA films. DEFA film enthusiasts, or fans, form the last category, which at the same time is the most interesting, as these viewers often share a deep personal connection with the DEFA.

As there are no studies to provide evidence for my claims I collected my own data to find basic information the structural composition and the intentions of the audience of DEFA films. I adapted Janice Radway's study Reading the Romance and used a three-tiered approach of a pilot study with a personal interview, followed by questionnaires, and personal interviews to collect the data material.⁶⁵ In September 2004 I conducted a pilot study with an older couple from Brandenburg, asking them to talk about their viewing habits, their attitude towards films and television, and their memories about the DEFA (Birkholz and Freundel). Parallel to this study between September and December 2004, I distributed 160 questionnaires at movie theaters and a film club in Berlin and Frankfurt/ Oder, where I invited audiences of DEFA films to complete a brief survey

⁶⁵ Radway used a combination of oral interviews, followed up by two sets of questionnaires to select her participants and collect the data.

about the films they had just attended. After a preliminary data analysis I contacted eight participants about longer interviews in April 2005. The outcome of my data collection resulted in my thesis of four types of DEFA film viewers and the rationales behind their visits to DEFA films.

To interpret my data I applied a combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies. Cook defines the quantitative method as “multivariate statistical analyses, sample surveys, and the like. In contrast, qualitative methods include ethnography, case studies, in-depth interviews” (7). Feldman argues that “only by using multiple techniques can the researcher triangulate on the underlying truth” (21) and supports Patton who admits that quantitative and qualitative methods “constitute alternative, but not mutually exclusive, strategies for research,” (14) which underlines the importance of combining various approaches to understand the audience structure and their impetus to see a DEFA film.

For my pilot study in September 2004 I interviewed a couple who were 79 and 75 years old at the time of the conversation. The couple, residents of the city of Brandenburg, were not married, but shared most of their time together. I contacted them after a colleague of mine described her father and his life partner as “television junkies” obsessed with old films. After a preliminary telephone contact I suggested an informal meeting at their house to keep their anxiety level low.

The underlying structure of the conversation I planned had two objectives. First, I wanted to collect possible motives for watching DEFA films, particularly since these films were now a part of history with neither the studios nor the society existed anymore. I tested Meyen’s thesis that the distance in time and space to the GDR would influence the decision of an audience which films to watch, and that their choice of television

entertainment was based on other factors such as convenient screening times, quality of entertainment, or familiarity with the programs.

What I discovered in my conversation was that a combination of both factors entered into this couple's viewing, although the category of the national and political motivation played a less important role than I assumed. The two participants of the pilot study hardly distinguished between Ufa and DEFA films when they mentioned a selection of films they had watched over the past weeks. Instead, they listed names of actors that appeared in films they enjoy. Marika Röck and Heinz Rühmann, two Ufa stars that were active during the National Socialist control of the Ufa, were the two actors they revered most, followed by Hans Albers, also an Ufa star.

When I mentioned DEFA films, both tried unsuccessfully to recall actors or directors. They confirmed names as Konrad Wolf, Kurt Maetzig and Manfred Krug on my prompting. Both remembered the release of the Thälmann sequels, praised the films as "good as signal against fascism" but emphasized that "one went there because it was expected of you." Furthermore, they referred to "old films as different, free from violence, nudity and sex, leaving things to your imagination" and concluded that the American films were "made not for our generation." Throughout the conversation, the couple connected films with personal memories from their youth and adolescence. Later, they compared the plots of DEFA films with their experience of "reality in the GDR." As adult audiences of the movies, both were "sophisticated citizens who knew what was going on in the film and what reality looked like." They deciphered the messages and criticism of DEFA directors and judged the film reality against the reality of GDR society. At the end of our conversation, they were still talking about titles of DEFA films and reminded each other of actors, related film titles, and tried to associate events from their lives that took place in the year a certain film was released.

The pilot study yielded some interesting results about audiences who do not deliberately seek out DEFA films at movie theaters. Although it is not possible to make definite statements about the difference between East Germans going to see a DEFA film at a theater, and another group who watches the films only on TV,⁶⁶ there are nevertheless some general implications about DEFA films one can draw from this pilot study. For one, audiences select films according to their attractiveness, entertainment value, and stars.⁶⁷ This explains the difficulties for the couple to attach the label DEFA to films. Instead, they wanted to see musicals and chose a film with Marika Röck, or opted for adventure films with Manfred Krug, regardless of the films' era of production or country of origin. Ufa films and later films from the West became increasingly accessible during the 1970s and 1980s and made it easier for many GDR citizens to choose their entertainment. Some citizens of the GDR attended DEFA films by Konrad Wolf and Kurt Maetzig because the screenings were part of a public outing of their workplace and the party. Lastly, the younger generation went to the movies to escape their parents and to spend time with friends or with their date.

Along with changes in society came a radical generational shift. The new generation of post-wall adolescents did not distinguish between East and West Germans anymore. The young generation grew up with the narrative patterns of Hollywood films, while audiences used to the narrative style of DEFA films seek orientation in films with different structures. They required plots that developed characters, were set in familiar environments, and left room for imagination with open endings or unexpected twists. The scenarios are now historical depictions of real scenarios in the past. Audiences

⁶⁶ As a second objective I planned to compare the opinions of non-cinemagoers whom I would not reach with my questionnaires to those of audiences at movie theaters. It is unfortunately not possible to make definitive statements about differences between the two groups, since I relied on only one couple in my pilot study. They are not representative of a larger part of society without access to films in movie theaters.

⁶⁷ Although the GDR preferred the term "audience favorite" (Publikumsliebling) to refer to their stars, GDR actors fulfill Richard Dyer's four categories of the relationship between star and audience as well: Emotional affinity, self-identification, imitation, and projection (18).

remember problems at their workplace in the GDR and recall empty shelves on their shopping trips. DEFA films to them are critical statements commenting on the past that reflects their individual histories and allow the comparison with the present.

A CASE STUDY OF DEFA FILM AUDIENCES

A week after the pilot study I distributed questionnaires to audiences of DEFA films at movie theaters and film clubs. I collected 160 surveys between September and December 2004 from visitors in Berlin, Potsdam, Dresden, and Frankfurt/Oder, a high number considering the fact that – according to my observations during this period – the average audience of a DEFA film screening amounted to seven people. This allowed me on the other hand to distribute my questionnaire to approximately 80% of all viewers leaving the movie theater after a film. I usually waited at the exit of the theaters⁶⁸ and asked the viewers for their cooperation with my dissertation regarding DEFA films by completing a brief survey with fifteen open ended questions about their personal experience with DEFA cinema. After initial hesitation only a handful of people returned the questionnaires to me empty. Others completed the survey after I reassured them of anonymity and emphasized that I was looking for their personal opinion and not for an expert evaluation of DEFA films.

The questionnaire fulfilled the two tasks of gaining access to the audience and gathering information about it. The contact with the audiences of DEFA films allowed me to assess the popularity of DEFA films in general, and provided me with access to the audience as potential participants in my study. Furthermore, the content of the

⁶⁸ I was invited to speak about the development and current state of DEFA scholarship in the US for the film club *Kleines Kino* in Frankfurt/ Oder before I introduced my project. Overall, the audiences were very interested in the project, welcomed my research about the DEFA and often stayed for a discussion with me after the completion of their survey.

questionnaires allowed me to see the degree to which DEFA films occupy the lives of Germans and to understand reasons for their visits to DEFA film screenings. Finally, the information extracted from the questionnaires provided me with the data to classify audiences of DEFA films.

My first goal in using the questionnaires was to establish a skeleton of biographical information that would tell me the age and regional identification of my participants to understand the audience structure.⁶⁹ In a second step I provided fifteen open-ended questions, grouped into four clusters, which asked for personal details about an individual's connection to DEFA films. I used these questions in order to understand more about the interest of film audiences while I was looking to expose tendencies explaining the interest in the films.

With the first cluster of questions I aimed to identify the DEFA experience of the audience in the past and learn about their current general interest in DEFA films. Questions 2 and 3 asked the participants to identify their very first DEFA film and the year they saw it. The following questions 4 and 5 looked for a comparison between the number of DEFA and non-DEFA films seen per annum, and the questions 8 and 9 inquired about a favorite DEFA film and the reason for its popularity with the participant.

In the second cluster I elicited more specific information about the interest for DEFA films. Question 12 asked for reasons of their visit to the film shown the day of completing the survey, whereas questions 6 and 7 looked for their general motivation for watching DEFA films and to account for their specific interest in DEFA films.

The third cluster aimed at the viewing habits and looked at the extent the participants were involved in public discussions about the DEFA. Question 10 asked subjects to identify the location of the DEFA screening, be it at a movie theater or film

⁶⁹ See the appendix for a German and English version of the questionnaire.

club, on television, or via tapes and DVDs of DEFA films. Question 11 repeated the same question for non-DEFA films and question 13 inquired about knowledge of or participation in DEFA fan clubs or internet forums about the DEFA.

The fourth and final cluster asked the participants to evaluate role and benefits of DEFA films for the united Germany. Question 14 looked for the cultural significance and the value of DEFA films for Germany, and question 15 invited them to voice their thoughts about DEFA cinema and the GDR in general. The data derived from answers to these four clusters provided a thorough and interesting comment about the relation between East and West Germans, the attitude of the new generation of post-unification Germans, and the current state of DEFA cinema in Germany.

RESULTS

While I allowed the participants to remain anonymous while completing the questionnaires, I asked them to provide at least their age and country of origin. The regional classification allowed me to look at connections between age and reasons for a visit to DEFA films. For example, compared to the ratio of young West Germans to all West Germans in DEFA films – two of 28 – about twice as many East Germans between 18 and 25 – nineteen of 110 – were interested in the films.⁷⁰ This is even more surprising if one takes into consideration that this generation was between three and ten years old at unification and remembers the GDR only vaguely so that nostalgia should not be a factor in their curiosity in the films. I assumed that most of the nineteen East Germans between 18 and 25 would remember the children's films from their GDR past and refer to memories or nostalgia as driving factors behind their visit. All of them reaffirmed my assumption and talked about DEFA children films at some point during the survey.

⁷⁰ The entire set of results for all questions can be found in the appendix.

At the same time I was curious to see how the two young West Germans would respond to the same question about their visit. One of them mentioned an interest in history, the other one was eager to learn about GDR society to understand the current antagonism between East and West Germans better. As the last generation of the divided Germany, their perception of East and West has become blurred. Most of them do not look back to the GDR but live in the present. Only one of the East German participants in this age group gave nostalgia as a reason for seeing a DEFA film, while the others mentioned interest in German history (four), the entertainment value or a film star in a leading role of this film (five), personal memories (three), and interest in the structure of GDR society and the depiction of everyday life (six). Participants in this age group were aware of the former division of Germany, but seem to be indifferent to the division now. If one transfers these results to German society, it is not too far fetched to argue that the persistent East-West distinction of the post-unification years is no longer existent among this generation.

The following generation between 26 and 33 year-olds, from eleven to eighteen years old at the *Wende*, grew up in the GDR, spent a significant time in the GDR youth organization *Freie Deutsche Jugend* FDJ, and should be familiar with DEFA films as part of the cultural and political life in schools and the youth groups. As part of this generation having grown up in the West a half-hour drive away from the border in Bavaria, I remember school trips to the border. West Germans from the same age group were old enough to understand the concept of two German states, the fence and wall dividing the two countries, and the difference in political systems.

Only nine people in this age group, five from the East and four from the West, were interested in the films. Each of the West Germans came for a different reason, only interest in the depiction of history was mentioned twice whereas nobody associated

personal memories with the films. The East German participants answered similarly with two exceptions: three of them came because they had a personal memory connected to the film. Nobody on the East German side was curious to see GDR society depicted in the film. An explanation for these results and the low turn-out at DEFA films may be found in the structure of FRG and GDR. West Germans did not know much about the everyday life in the East. If there were relatives in the GDR, the occasional letter or telephone call and a “care packet” with coffee, sweets, magazines and clothes to help the “poor” relatives often reflected the attitude towards the GDR.

The access to music, fashion and films from the West had become easier to young East Germans in the 1980s. Trends were copied in the GDR, and generational problems like first love, conflicts with the parent generation and the authorities were the same in East or West (König Bluejeans). Both youth generations East and West of the Berlin Wall modeled their lives after their American idols, as it had been the case for at least two decades with James Dean and Elvis Presley. The fall of the Wall, although unexpected, ended the physical limitations for young East Germans. Mentally, the generation X had been prepared for changes. Many of them studied English instead of Russian, relocated to the West for better employment opportunities, and ignored politics as they had done in the GDR. Logically, a great part of this generation focused on their individual development and caught up with the West quickly. Their connection to the East after 1990 may have been limited to the celebration of the pop-cultural aspects of *Ostalgie* by donning their FDJ shirts and listening to GDR music. As film audience, they do not see DEFA films depicting or at least reflecting their lives, and have at least for now turned away from it.

By far the largest group within the audience of DEFA films is the generation of the 34 to 55 year olds who experienced the controversy around the banning of the

Kaninchenfilme in 1965. This group was the first generation having grown up entirely in the political system of the GDR. Their West German counterparts had been citizens of the Federal Republic or West Berlin, some experienced the Cold War, the building of the Wall, *Ostpolitik* regulating the co-existence of FRG and GDR, and all of them saw the end of the GDR when they were between 19 and 40 years old.

Out of the 138 Germans returning a questionnaire, 39 East Germans and eleven West Germans fall into this age group. 21 East Germans attended DEFA films because of personal memories they connect with a certain film, 25 chose DEFA films because of their entertainment value and familiar stars, and eleven each came to see the depiction of German history and the reflection of GDR society, while only four watched films for nostalgic reasons. On the West German side, five people were each attending a screening for interest in the depiction of historical events and to see familiar stars, potentially with careers in East and West such as Manfred Krug. Only one came for nostalgic reasons and another one showed up to learn about the GDR.

Clearly, the interest of West Germans in DEFA films seemed not to be a deeper understanding of East Germans, their customs and their everyday lives. They showed up to watch the famous DEFA anti-fascist films of the post-war period that belong to a list of “must-see” films. Some West Germans did not know about the origin of the films. One West German replied to my remark that he had just seen a film from the GDR with the words: “I thought there was communist propaganda in it. Too bad, they ruined a good film!” Another one mentioned he saw the name Manfred Krug whom he loved in his role as West Berlin detective Liebling-Kreuzberg, when he decided to watch the film. He did not know Krug had had a successful career in the GDR before leaving it for the FRG.

In contrast, the East German audience was mainly interested in DEFA films to compare their present view of the GDR with the past. Some specifically expressed

interest in the banned films, simply to see why they were banned. They were almost upset to see the normality of the films from their present point of view, although all of them understood the criticism about the conditions in the GDR. The group of 25 visitors valuing the entertainment factor and praising the acting in the films as well as the 21 people who came to see a film reminding them of events in their past shared a connection insofar as DEFA films combined their private histories with memories of the GDR.

For this part of the audience, DEFA films are a part of their individual history as well as the framework of entertainment they were accustomed to. By no means did they accept the films blindly as the truth, but were nonetheless able to discover their own experiences and lives in DEFA films, which was something films from the FRG or Hollywood films could never accomplish. Even after the changes, perhaps because of these, DEFA films are their national “Kulturerbe” (Finke) that reflects the dynamics of GDR culture and the *Eigen-Sinn* (Lindenberger) of East Germans. Both groups of East and West Germans reveal the German division more than any of the other age groups in the survey. Having grown up with the dichotomy East vs. West, the reception of DEFA films illustrates the East-West division clearly.

One finds a small and stunningly balanced part of the audience one generation earlier, consisting of 56 to 63-year-olds in 2004. Too young to be a part of the generation to have fought in the war, but some of them old enough to have experienced the National Socialist order as young children, the East Germans grew up with the films of Socialist Realism, celebrating the new, democratic and peaceful order in the East, while the West Germans prospered in their strong economy built with funds from the Marshall Plan. “The Triumph of the Ordinary” (Feinstein) in the East, and DEFA films that repeatedly looked at the German guilt while the idyllic *Heimatfilm* in the West reappeared to help audiences escape not only reality but an honest assessment of their fascist past as well.

Only ten people, six from the East and four from the West, participated in the survey, but their answers were more diverse than the results from any other group. As usual, four West Germans mentioned history as their main interest in DEFA films, while two others were interested in the depiction of society, and two mentioned the entertainment value of the films. Two East Germans from this generation saw the films for their history, nobody felt nostalgic about the films at all, and three people described being motivated by the stars, their memories, and the depiction of the GDR in the film. As the group that identified most with the protagonists of the banned films, many East Germans compared their feelings and memories of the past with their present situation. They remembered best the discussions around the films, and they mentioned they had not been surprised about the ban. In fact, as more than one person recalled, they were usually surprised about the liberties taken in many DEFA films. Often they went to the films to see which passages the censors did not catch, and were happy to see these segments and the entire films for this reason. As members of a generation not yet limited by travel restrictions and the Wall, many had regularly traveled to the Western sectors of Berlin to see American films before 1961. Despite the shortages and problems in their country, many emphasized they were happy to live in an anti-fascist state that was not ruled by the economy. Having grown up during the building of the GDR, they looked at the films critically, but were quick to contrast the socialist messages in DEFA films with films from the West that simply “carried the opposite message but spoke the same language”. To East and West Germans from that generation, a unified Germany reminded them of their early childhood and the War. At the same time, the DEFA films they grew up with had been altered to reflect society. The GDR, as one of the participants mentioned, appeared to be only on the surface the way it was depicted in the films.

In contrast to these East German viewers, many West Germans were not able to decipher the message many plots delivered. Instead, West German audiences constantly compared the “Ostzone” with their home in the West. For many West German viewers in this age group, DEFA films took on a mirror function to reaffirm the West German dominance over the East: “Er sieht den Trabant und denkt an den Käfer...er sieht den falschen Indianer Gojko Mitic und denkt an den falschen Indianer Pierre Brice“ (Jauer). Thus, many East and West Germans of this generation are still stuck in their old environment. For decades, the other side was constructed as the enemy, which is still reflected in the uncomfortable feelings East and West Germans still have for each other.

The oldest group of DEFA viewers among my respondents consisted of people older than 64 years. In 1990, they had turned at least 50 years old, and most of them had grown up in Hitler’s Germany, fought actively in the war, and were separated afterwards by the German division. Only four West Germans, but 30 East Germans in this age group participated in the study.

The reactions of West Germans were similar to those in the other age groups: two came to see a DEFA film for historical interest, two mentioned the entertainment, and one added nostalgia as reason for the visit. With one exception of a female historian, all other West Germans of this age group were unaware of the DEFA being the GDR film studio. They admitted their interest in the film topic and saw their expectations of a good film about German history fulfilled. Everybody declared their interest in more DEFA films in the future.

On the East German side, only one person watched DEFA films for nostalgic reasons, while eleven people were interested in the depiction of German history in DEFA films. They believed that DEFA films had an advantage in showing the National Socialist regime as they would look at that time period from the perspective of the

victims. According to these viewers, stories about the persecution of Jews and Communists were more credible in DEFA filmmaking, as the entire nation GDR was constructed as anti-fascist state and encouraged films for the re-education of Germans. Only five East Germans were looking for the depiction of everyday life in the GDR. members of a generation that saw the rise and fall of the GDR, they compared the transitional time 1989/90 with the new beginning of 1945 and inevitable changes that affected their lives only to certain extents as they had already retired when the Wall came down. Many had been able to travel to the FRG and visit relatives rather frequently.

Similar to the couple from the pilot study, most of them missed the DEFA films because they provided good entertainment in familiar settings. 24 East Germans of this age group referred to stars and to the entertainment value of DEFA films as their main viewing reason, despite the fact that many of the films were clearly produced to promote socialism. A possible explanation may be the saturation of GDR society with propaganda that was ignored by the recipients. Since GDR citizens were surrounded by socialist terminology all over daily life it seems likely that socialist phrases and “hidden” messages in films could have been blocked out. This section of the audience remembered the plot and the stars, and associated their personal memories with the film.

A more general breakdown of the regional identification revealed interesting results. Out of 160 questionnaires, only nine respondents were not German. Two participants were from France and two from Italy, one each from Switzerland, Japan, Russia, Belgium and the United Kingdom. These audience members were mainly interested in depictions of history and the style of DEFA films, although a third specifically mentioned an interest in learning about everyday life in the GDR. Neither cared about the political circumstances behind the production of the films, and all agreed that the films they saw were qualitatively well made. This small part of foreign audience

is not linked to DEFA films by a sociological or cultural connection as they mostly have no memories tied to some of the events. In contrast to Germans, they focused exclusively on the historical scenarios in the plots of the films. The group of nine people applied their historical knowledge and projected it onto the events depicted in DEFA films.

Although this may not be surprising, there is a contrast perceptible to the 138 Germans who attended the film screenings. Fifty Germans gave historical interest as one reason for their visit to DEFA films. Another 50 Germans claimed personal memories and 28 the depiction of society as driving factors behind their visit. The depiction of history in DEFA films is certainly important to the current audience of DEFA films. According to Christiane Mückenberger, audiences believe that the anti-fascist DEFA films “are some of the most enduring in the minds of contemporary cinema-goers” (“Anti-Fascist” 58), a statement these respondents to my questionnaire confirm. 28 of the 95 participants who remembered their first DEFA film listed an anti-fascist film.

AUDIENCE MOTIVATIONS

Regardless of their age and origin, current audiences of DEFA films listed five main motivations for seeing a DEFA film. Among these they associate personal memories, i.e. life experiences, with a certain star, film, or genre. This is mostly the case for East Germans, as especially in the early years of the GDR, DEFA films were the main source of entertainment in that country. The films provided pleasant memories as the viewers identified with film protagonists, saw parallels between their and the viewer's lives, or used the film as the proverbial knot in the handkerchief to remember an enjoyable event. Virtually no West German shared such a link to DEFA films. Instead, West German or US films played this role in their lives.

A similar effect can be observed when interpreting the star as a factor of interest for the audience. There are some film personalities, the most famous being Manfred Krug, who left the GDR to continue their work in the Federal Republic. Both sides would claim Krug as their star, and occasionally some viewers were unaware of his career in both countries. A part of the audience would attend a film screening simply to see their star. While most West German stars were recognized in the GDR, the opposite was hardly the case. Recently have German films started featuring them successfully as “film faces” of the new Germany, as the examples of Katrin Saß in Good Bye Lenin or Michael Gwisdek in Kleinruppin forever demonstrate.

Although nostalgia was one of the driving factors in the 1990s to bring the GDR back and introduce some of its products during the *Ostalgie* wave, the questionnaires show that DEFA films were not a part of it. Only one person was inspired by *Ostalgie* to look at “the real GDR” as it may be found in DEFA films. Others may have chosen the term “nostalgia” to express their feelings towards a shrinking presence of the films. For some, the films offer a chance to remember the GDR with its close social network of family and friends and a different way of life. The fact that DEFA films depicted an idealized GDR society offers another advantage for the viewers. These films offer a sanctuary that allows the audience to recall the everyday life of the GDR without the reminder of the totalitarian society.

The fourth driving factor for interest in a DEFA film was the accurate depiction of historical events. DEFA films tackled delicate subjects such as the participation of the German industry in the Holocaust in Kurt Maetzig’s Der Rat der Götter, the attack on a radio station by German Special Forces disguised as Polish renegades to justify the attack on Poland as in Der Fall Gleiwitz, or the experiences of a young German-born Russian soldier who returns to Germany with the Red Army in Konrad Wolf’s Ich war 19. These

films were considered masterpieces of German cinema by East and West Germans alike. However, it was not the name DEFA that brought the audiences to these films, but the subject of the films. Many West Germans did not know that these films were made in the GDR and some had not heard the name DEFA before. Only the quality of the films, the familiarity with the film titles and how they approached historical subjects that were ignored in the West made them curios. Especially films depicting German history remain attractive among audiences.

For the older generations, the entertainment value of a film was most important. Especially in the age of cable television and an abundance of films, the need for a familiar environment becomes stronger. DEFA films, as any older German films, present German history around the structure of the traditional family and cultural values. These films leave room for imagination, develop a story line, and do not yet copy Hollywood patterns of action sequences, violence, and sex scenes. Depicting the lives of “average Germans,” the films present their plot in surroundings the viewers identify with. European cities, cars, street life, and characters resemble the traditional, well-known surroundings and allow an easier submersion into the film, something that is of utmost importance to the audiences.

DEFA films are a part of German film history. Both the similarities and differences in the reception of the films by East and West Germans show that the films provide entertainment and information, present tradition and innovation, and symbolize the history of a united and divided Germany at the same time. These dualities make the films important for current audiences of DEFA films.

TYPES OF DEFA VIEWERS

The audience of DEFA films is multi-faceted with viewers from all age groups. Some of them with personal connection to the films show considerably more interest in DEFA films than others, and East Germans know the films better than West Germans. I argue that within these groups, certain types of viewers are discernible, whose interest in DEFA films can be categorized on four levels. A categorization of film viewers will show how audiences choose DEFA films, and will comment on the relation between East and West Germans, their attitude towards the new Federal Republic, and the importance of retaining GDR culture within the new nation. For example, a viewer who watches a DEFA film “by accident” and otherwise has no experience with, personal connection to, or interest in the GDR will have a different opinion about the GDR than a DEFA fan who follows DEFA films assiduously and has a personal connection to the DEFA film he watches.

Based on the information taken from the questionnaires, I propose four categories of viewers: the accidental viewer, the casual viewer, the interested viewer, and the enthusiast. Accidental viewers see a film by accident. They may have come out of curiosity to see what the film is about, recognized the title as a film classic, or be interested in characteristics of a GDR film. Some join a friend or family member; others attend screenings because DEFA films were part of a larger series of genre films. The accidental viewer is not too familiar with the GDR or the DEFA, and will most likely watch another DEFA film only by accident again. Many of the West German audience members fall into this category, as does the young generation that has only a limited knowledge of the GDR.

Viewers from the young generation belong also to the casual viewer, a second type. A casual viewer is not too informed about the films, but recognizes the titles of

well-known DEFA films and goes to watch those on occasion. Some West Germans are in this group, and many East Germans who in the GDR were already watching Western television, and selected the best entertainment possible. DEFA films still attract them, especially children's films, fairytales, and antifascist films. Unlike yet another group of the interested viewer who actively seeks out DEFA films, records them on television, and tries not to miss these films, the casual viewer puts the DEFA films on a level with other films and critically distinguishes between qualitatively good and bad DEFA films.

Interested viewers constitute the third category. An interested viewer compares DEFA films with other films, and often believes that DEFA films are of a better quality than other films. Interested viewers choose these films over Hollywood productions because of a "DEFA style". Their familiarity with the films, actors, and plot structures makes the interested viewer an active observer of DEFA films in theaters and on television. If given the choice between a DEFA film and another film, this category of viewers often snubs the alternative option and selects the DEFA film.

Enthusiasts, the last category, watch and record any DEFA film possible. Mostly consisting of East Germans, this group is strongly rooted in the GDR, has a personal connection to the films or the studio, and believes that DEFA films are still significant for society. This group values DEFA films as unique in their stylistic approach, while it sees the necessity of keeping the films as historic documents to learn from them about the GDR. These viewers also want to ensure the preservation and future screening of the films to keep GDR history alive and integrate it in the twentieth century German history.

All participants attended the screenings voluntarily, i.e. were driven by a motivation to see a particular film. Comments in the questionnaires about the GDR and the DEFA explained what people from different backgrounds who watched the films thought about the current state of DEFA films, their functions in the new Germany, and

the implication of the films for the relation of East and West. It was rather uncomplicated to categorize the participants of the 160 questionnaires into these four categories. Most survey answers provided enough information to sort the participant accordingly. Only in a few cases, especially in those for the casual and the interested viewer, was it difficult to make an ultimate decision.

While the questionnaires did not require the disclosure of personal information I explained that I would be interested in longer interviews with a few interested people. From the pool of participants who provided their contact information in the optional section I selected 31 participants, whose comments reflected a personal opinion about DEFA films, and their stance towards recent German history and unification. My goal was to talk to one representative person from each category to show the individual facets of the current DEFA film audience.

The first group of accidental viewers is the smallest subgroup of DEFA audiences, but at the same time the largest percentage of Germans. They come to see a film they may know by its title, its actors, or its genre. What most do not know – or not care about – is the fact that the films are a part of DEFA cinema. These viewers do not have much information about the GDR, let alone the DEFA, and watch the films merely because they are interested in the plot. DEFA films are important to them for the depiction of historical events. Other than that, accidental viewers do not associate the films with personal experiences. As viewers detached from GDR history accidental viewers feel uncomfortable talking about a history they consider not their own. Three examples of participants who fall into this category of accidental viewers reveal how their position towards East Germans is reflected in their attitude about DEFA films. Their negative reaction to my interview request comments on how they perceive the relationship between East and West Germans.

Two West German participants I contacted (Surveys #44 and 139) about a follow-up interview did not return my calls. Number 44, a West German architect, 36 years old, came to a screening of Die Architekten (Peter Kahane, 1992) to see a film about his own profession. According to his survey, he was interested in the topic, but realized that “dealing with the GDR was strange for someone from the West,” and compared to 60 other films he watched only one DEFA film per year. He believed DEFA films were important “so people can notice the changes.”

His survey responses and his lack of interest in a follow-up interview indicate two things. He sought entertainment in films he watches, and preferred to compare his own life to the on-screen experience. As a West German, he was not exposed to DEFA film, and after unification, he saw DEFA films as one commodity among many others. Although the film he watched is packed with information about GDR society and everyday life, he focused on the profession of the protagonists and attempted to translate their experiences into his own environment. Even fifteen years after unification, he admitted his lack of understanding of East German history as part of a larger German history. He perceived DEFA films as useful tools in the process of German unification to compare the before and after scenarios. Implicitly, he seemed to reiterate the statement that East Germans gained more from unification than they lost. At the same time, he may have been afraid of a confrontation with facts that could potentially contradict his view of the GDR as “strange” country. The architect’s perception of the GDR as totalitarian state regulating all aspects of public and private life legitimizes studies such as Mühlberg’s appeal to describe the “otherness” of the GDR to build bridges between East and West (648).

Participant #139, an unemployed 35-year-old West German, watched approximately ten DEFA films per year. He believed they are entertaining films and a

part of German film history as well as historical documents. Despite the large number of DEFA films, he still belongs to the group of accidental viewers because he does not specifically select DEFA films. Moreover, with a total number of 200 films per year, the ratio of DEFA films to other films watched is lower than that of many other viewers. He recognized DEFA films as “historical documents” and believed they are “important, not only for the GDR.” At the same time, he did not give a reason for his visit to the DEFA film that night, and he never contacted me about a follow-up interview. Interesting about his answers is certainly his emphasis on the historical character of DEFA films. However, it remains unclear if he is considering a certain genre of DEFA films or if all films regardless of their message qualified as historical documents. As such, it would have been interesting to learn about his thoughts on DEFA films and their role in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The third participant in this group was an eighteen-year-old female student from Frankfurt/ Oder. She had no active knowledge of the GDR anymore as she has grown up in unified Germany most of her life. Survey #12, showed her confusion with the term DEFA: although she was familiar with the GDR, she was not able to distinguish between DEFA and other films. Neither did she know about the film Karla before she attended the screening that evening. To her, the film “showed the world from a different perspective” and, although her mother “convinced me to join her” she enjoyed the film a lot. In the follow-up interview (Seelige), she admitted that her mother invited her to see the film, which she would not have done otherwise. She has learned most of her knowledge about the GDR in school or from her parents, and she saw her parents’ lives mirrored in the film to a certain extent.

At the same time she believed DEFA films provide only little if no information about life in the GDR at all. They were more demanding in their plot as they approach

problems and show possible realistic solutions. She thought that certain DEFA films may attract a young crowd interested in GDR pop culture, but the problem of these films was that they did not appeal to the modern youth because the topics they address were outdated. The distinction GDR or non-GDR film is no longer relevant to her generation as they consider themselves the post-wall generation. DEFA films are as attractive to them as any other old film, and unless there is a personal connection to the film, any member of her generation would be an accidental viewer of DEFA film.

More informed about DEFA films are participants belonging to the group of casual viewers. They can identify films as DEFA films by their title, and they watch DEFA films when their time permits. In contrast to the accidental viewer, the casual viewer has seen many DEFA films. Casual viewers also enjoy the films and often watch them again to compare their impressions from the present and the past. These viewers have pleasure watching the films, and recognize their own lives in the films as well. They remember the difference between the GDR in the films and in reality. The casual viewer watches DEFA films for pleasure, sometimes to satisfy a nostalgic or sentimental desire for the past. The films carry memories, good and bad, that are brought up again, as the interview with a couple from the East, surveys #16 and 17, shows. They are 62 and 75 years old, have known DEFA films all of their lives, and still enjoy watching the films when they notice them listed in their television guide (Schüßling).

The husband emphasized the quality of antifascist films of the DEFA and believed that DEFA films carry a message. He recognized cultural and political structures in the films he knew first hand. His familiarity with everyday life made him believe that DEFA films would not be useful to West Germans since they did not share the first hand experience of GDR life and would have difficulties understanding subtle remarks about politics in the films. Although he believes that DEFA films should be

preserved as historical documents for future generations, he does not think they would contribute much to a deeper understanding between East and West Germans.

This participant expressed the opinion of a generation that perceived the political and cultural changes of 1989/90 as one of many in their life time. DEFA films represent a large period of his lives. Their exposure to changing political realities taught this generation to accept new cultural directions. For example, the changes in 1945 brought an entirely different order to East Germany. Films from their childhood and youth were banned and disappeared completely, while other films propagating a new way of life accompanied the following decades. The disappearance of DEFA films – and their replacement by a new wave of films representing trends of post-wall Germany – is not synonymous for the repression of East Germans. Although some may have experienced a loss of familiarity and security in the society of the GDR as a result of unification, they nevertheless see the positive sides of unification and take into account the disappearance and replacement of elements associated with the outdated culture.

His wife, 62 years old, shared his opinion, but pointed out that DEFA films had become more popular with older people since unification. Some people were preserving the legacy of the GDR by means of watching DEFA films. Many films showed an idealized GDR that never existed. It was possible to understand the message of the films. The comparison of filmic imagination and reality illustrated the shortcomings of the GDR. She believed that all DEFA films, especially the banned films, should be archived and be accessible to future generations as documents of an important time in German history. Although the films might not be missed in present day Germany, they represented the GDR, its people, and their personal histories. She pointed out that DEFA films carried individual meanings for each person from the former GDR that would be lost if these films were not to be shown anymore.

Most striking about her comments is the emphasis on the meaning of DEFA films that would be of interest for East Germans and future generations. The films belong to the past and play no significant role in present day Germany. She implied that West Germans who have experienced the division of Germany are not expected to show interest in the history and culture of the GDR. Here, she confirms Konrad Jarausch's thesis that West German culture influenced life in the GDR, and since the 1960s the Federal Republic had become the standard on which life in the GDR was measured upon. For a casual viewer, DEFA films allow a retrospective into their own past and their lives before unification, when a lifestyle as it was customary in the Federal Republic remained a dream for the average GDR citizen.

From the perspective of DEFA scholars, the two potentially most interesting viewer types are the interested viewers and the DEFA film enthusiasts. They seek the films actively out, record them, buy them, often study them and attend public film screenings to discuss the films. Viewers from both groups often prefer DEFA films to other films because of their personal connection with the films. While both groups know the films and the actors very well, the difference between them is that the enthusiasts are DEFA film experts. They know additional information about the films, for example technical details, or anecdotes about the production of a film. DEFA enthusiasts are non-academic scholars with immense background knowledge of DEFA film. One example from each group will show how participants who are very familiar with DEFA film interpret the current role of these films in the Federal Republic of 2004.

The interview with a 46-year-old female teacher from East Germany was conducted together with her 18-year-old daughter (Seelige). In contrast to her daughter, her mother completed survey #127 with answers that pointed to a person interested in DEFA films. Similar to other respondents, she believed the films reflected everyday life

in the GDR, although the depiction of this life was glorified and did not necessarily mirror reality. At the same time she was afraid that DEFA films would disappear from the historic memory as many other things from the GDR vanished in the years after unification. In her opinion, DEFA films survived the changes because they were popular and were still seen by a fairly large part of the East German population. The popularity was based on two reasons, the quality of the films and their plot structure. Because many DEFA films were not produced for success at the box office, the directors were able to finish films without time pressure. She believed that the films left a lasting impression on the viewer because of their love to the detail. They always tackled a problem of society instead of following genre conventions some viewers may be accustomed to from non-DEFA films. She pointed out that Films produced by the DEFA showed problems and offered solutions whose success was not based on beauty and money, but on ingenious strategies, discussions, and creative thinking. Many East Germans were now able to compare both approaches from the distance, and rediscover the old strategies for new problems.

Although at first sight her answers seem to indicate that DEFA films may be more useful to East Germans than to West Germans, a closer look opens up the use value of these films for all Germans. The plots of DEFA films show the past realities of the GDR while carrying a universal message. As a counterpoint to commercial films, DEFA films offer alternative ways to deal with difficult situations that are applicable to life in any society. A glorified look on GDR society that is in the foreground of many DEFA films also reaffirms the failure of the political system that resulted in the demise of the GDR. The model character of the films allows an interested viewer to look back in history, learn from the past, and compare critically the present with personal memories and imaginations of that time.

As an exemplary member of the final category of enthusiasts I interviewed a former employee of the DEFA television studios (Bodt). He was a 56-year-old East German DEFA film fan, had seen the major part of DEFA feature films, and owned a huge collection of films. DEFA films accompanied him his entire life. He saw DEFA films as cultural and political alternative to the regular television programs. Although he conceded that many films either contain ideological messages or were curtailed by politics in the GDR, he believed that DEFA films had become a symbol for the GDR. They reflected GDR history and showed the society beyond the SED dictatorship. Despite the censorship and limitations for directors and actors, the films were able to transport messages to their audiences, and some films could be understood better than before unification. In his opinion personal memories associated with DEFA films were the main reason to see the films nowadays, which made East Germans keener to accept the films as part of German history. He argued that new generations lacked the interest in DEFA films as a result of the missing personal connection to the GDR.

All interviews have one thing in common: they are by no means representative of their respective category. The interviews show a diverse audience of DEFA films consisting of East and West Germans of all ages with varying degrees of knowledge about and awareness of the DEFA. Their interest in the films may be marginal or to the point of an expert who religiously follows DEFA films.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study appear to contradict Hobsbawm's theory of social cohesion. The multitude of viewer types and motivations demands a reconsideration of the notion of DEFA films as "invented tradition." In fact, the responses show that each participant defined this "tradition" individually; they all watched the films with their own

expectations, compared the films to their own past experiences, and interpreted the the films on their own. Hobsbawm's explanation of "tradition" falls short of the complexity that the tradition of DEFA films created.

DEFA films, however, have been invented as a tradition in the sense that they represent the past. The films fit the requirements Hobsbawm ascribes to traditions; what they lack is perhaps based on the misconception that the rituals used to celebrate tradition, such as the flags, anthems etc., must be identical. While each member of the audience may perceive the information that is presented in the tradition in a different way, depending on their motivation and their personal memory, they all accept the films as a tradition. Here, the two concepts of personal, "subjective" memory and "objective" tradition merge to create these various strains that seem to reject the notion of cohesion among DEFA audiences.

Taken together as the collective memory of the GDR, as perceived by audience members and their interpretation of what constitutes the DEFA tradition, one can see that the plurality of readings is no longer the invented tradition in Hobsbawm's sense, but a new concept in permanent fluctuation, depending on the variety of individual interpretations of tradition. Out of the mass of individual interpretations, there is a select group of key participants in this tradition that, more than any other group, help determine the contours of DEFA tradition: DEFA's fans.

Chapter 5

DEFA Fan Culture

In 1990, the existence of DEFA fans would have been inconceivable. While there were certainly people who were fond of the films, the film scholar Matt Hills's definition of a fan differentiates audiences interested in the films from a fan. According to Hills, a fan is "somebody who is obsessed, somebody who can produce reams of information on their object of fandom" (ix). After the fall of the Berlin wall and reunification, DEFA films, along with any fans they may have enjoyed, were left in limbo.

After the successful invention of DEFA films as a tradition, however, it was no longer frowned upon to watch the films; the "bad smell" of DEFA films Schlöndorff had referred to in 1992 had dissipated. DEFA films were now an accepted tradition and a means to commemorate the GDR past via its films, and the first careful beginnings of a fan culture slowly began to appear. This chapter will show how a DEFA fan culture is currently developing in Germany, and how the fans not only endorse DEFA films as German tradition, but are also actively involved in the ongoing invention of them.

This final chapter also illustrates how DEFA fandom is different from fan activities of other fan cultures. Hills proposes that fandom is a social activity predicated on the participation of fans "in communal activities – they are not 'socially atomised' or isolated viewers / readers" (ix). While one could argue that watching DEFA films could be a solitary activity, Hills also conceives of fandom as "always performative," providing "a cultural space for types of knowledge and attachment" (xi). DEFA fans, however, have yet to practice this sort of fandom; so far, they are different from other fan cultures in that they do not have any formal fan clubs or activities. In other words, they do not

share a “membership of an artificial [...] community” (Hobsbawm 9) of DEFA fans. Instead, the few fans that have made their fandom public on the world wide web are – at least so far – the only representation of DEFA fans, and are more integrated in an imagined community through these webpages. With their “fan work,” these fans expand the invention of a DEFA tradition as they document the history of DEFA, its films, and its significance for Germany.

DEFA FANDOM

One of my survey questions asked if the participant was a member of a DEFA fan club, if they visited online guest books or contributed to internet discussion groups devoted to DEFA films. Without exception, all surveys came back with “no” as an answer to this question. This would appear to suggest that there is no DEFA fan culture, but that is not the case. DEFA fan culture has taken on a different shape than other fan cultures. Unlike Star Trek and its *Trekkies*, who hold conventions, dress up in costumes and have actors as keynote speakers, DEFA fans perform their fandom more clandestinely by attending films, joining the *Film und Gespräch* discussions,⁷¹ and collecting memorabilia. Up to this day, no conventional DEFA fan club exists. There are, however, fan activities on the World Wide Web.

Googling the term “DDR” lists more than 106 million hits, the term “DEFA” provides still more than 8.3 million sites and there are thousands of sites mentioning DEFA films among other elements of GDR fan culture. Fan sites exclusively dedicated to DEFA cinema are rare; in fact, only two sites exist at the moment. The site DEFA-Fan (Rübner) was launched in 2001, and two years later in 2003 Katrin and Uta Zutz opened

⁷¹ These discussions take place at movie theaters in Berlin. Actors, directors, and film experts discuss the films in a roundtable setting with other experts or with the audience.

their page DEFA-Sternstunden. Both pages provide information about DEFA films, the studios, and the stars. Online guest books and discussion groups on the sites allow visitors to share their opinions and memories about the DEFA with other visitors. The pages differ in their information content, structure, and self-understanding as fan pages, but each of these two pages provides a platform for DEFA fans. A brief analysis of DEFA-Fan and DEFA-Sternstunden shows how DEFA fan culture is celebrated by fans that use their pages to stimulate interest in the DEFA films and operate them as discussion forums to exchange information with other DEFA fans.

DEFA-FAN

The web site DEFA-Fan (<http://www.defa-fan.de>) by Jens Rübner consists of nine different categories that cover the DEFA film genres, give a brief history of the DEFA, and exhibit scans of the page owner's collection of DEFA autographs.

Rübner introduces the visitor to the web site and his hobby in the first category, the *DEFA Stube*. He wants to “get to know people like me who are interested in films and share our opinions” and to make his hobby – collecting anything related to the DEFA – public. Rübner presents himself as a DEFA authority, offering his expertise and referring to the help that he has provided to exhibits and students writing their theses, thereby positioning himself at the center of DEFA film fandom. As proof of this fan status, he provides newspaper clippings about his hobby in the introductory section of the web page. The outside documentation of the newspaper clippings explains his fascination with the DEFA, legitimizes his work, and opens up new ways of sharing his collection. Other fans, potential clients interested in his expertise, and new DEFA film audiences are addressed in this portal to DEFA fandom.

Rübner's history of the DEFA is permeated by references to his own collection of films that contains "sämtliche Indianerfilme, die schönsten Märchen und Kinderfilme und natürlich auch solche Kultfilme wie Die Legende von Paul und Paula oder Die Spur der Steine" (Rübner). He provides his contact information on his website so that people can get in touch with him to find information, learn about the DEFA, and to sell or swap DEFA regalia. In contrast to most of the other sub pages, this category functions as a framework. Since it does not inform about films or actors, it takes on the function as provider of a logistical structure for DEFA fan culture.

Rübner's second category contains plot synopses of censored, banned, and unfinished films, as well as further information about directors, actors, and occasionally production notes about these films. He divides the films into "nicht aufgeführte Filme," i.e. films withdrawn before their release, "verbotene Filme" that were officially banned, and "abgebrochene Filme," which were stopped during shooting. Most of Rübner's summaries are based on external reviews. When one of the formerly banned films was finished – the film Die Schönste (Ernesto Remani 1957), which premiered in Berlin on 24 May, 2002 – Rübner updated his page to reflect this change. His list contains the entire film production of the 1965 "rabbit films" (Soldovieri Negotiating 241-7), expanded with inventories of the unscreened films Die Schönste, Sommerwege (Slatan Dudow, 1960), Hände hoch, oder ich schieße (Hans Joachim Kasprzik, 1966), Schnauzer (Maxim Dessau, 1983) and the unfinished films Allez Hop (Hans Fritz Köllner, 1946), Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder (Wolfgang Staudte, 1959), Lied über dem Tal (Gustav von Wangenheim, 1955/56), Haus im Feuer (Carl Balhaus, 1959), Altweibersommer (Hans Knötzsch, 1961), and Fräulein Schmetterling (Kurt Barthel, 1966).

The category of banned films interests fellow DEFA enthusiasts and newcomers equally. Rübner's film synopses and information provide access to basic information

about each film. At the same time, he enhances the fascination of the term “banned film” with visual aspects and animations of the web site. Sirens and the sound of a stamp assumingly censoring a film script accompany a flash animation of a red stamp with the words “Gesperrt – Der verbotene Film” stamping over a barbed wire and pictures of GDR border installations, complete with a simulated guard tower light.

The design of the web site mirrors the attractiveness of the banned DEFA films with audiences after unification. Drawing on the aura of the films as illegal objects, Rübner detaches them from official GDR politics and sets them up as vehicles of resistance against the SED. Continuous allusions to fear, persecution, and totalitarianism in the GDR evoke the impression of DEFA films as objects important to understand the “real” GDR as it was presumably depicted in the banned films. The fascination with banned films unites visitors of DEFA-Fan as it establishes banned DEFA films as objects of an internal struggle between arts and politics in the GDR.

Rübner’s page about the twelve famous DEFA *Indianerfilme* is structured similarly to the page about banned films. These DEFA Westerns narrated the life and destiny of the American Indians from their particular perspective, and quickly became some of the highest grossing films of DEFA cinema (Gemünden 28). An info page provides the date and shooting locations of the *Indianerfilme*, along with a comparison of the films with the US or the Spaghetti Western and a mention of the Yugoslavian star of these films, Gojko Mitic. A second page in the category of Indian films functions as a gateway to film synopses, adapted from film descriptions available on Amazon.

The web site about the *Indianerfilme* lists the most important facets of the films for visitors looking for basic information. Rübner integrates pictures of the film posters and actual screen shots taken from the *Indianerfilme* to stimulate interest. This approach promotes DEFA films to new audiences while it allows DEFA fans to rediscover them.

The comparison of the DEFA *Indianerfilme* with the US Western explains the different perspectives in their plot structures. It creates a familiar environment for viewers who are able to compare these films to other films from the Western genre.

Rübner's evaluation of the DEFA films reminds visitors of the different approaches of the entertainment industries of the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany. Rübner's interpretation of the DEFA films positions them qualitatively higher than other Westerns. He explains how the DEFA films are concerned with the life, culture, and history of the American Indian. Rübner criticizes the approach of the US Western genre as revisionist and emphasizes that DEFA *Indianerfilme* depict the oppression of the American Indians more accurately.

Rübner treats animated films by the DEFA differently. Unlike the smaller categories of banned films and the *Indianerfilme*, more than 750 animated films produced at the Studio für Trickfilme (Schenk and Scholze) forced Rübner to limit himself to a representative selection. His start page in this category contains some historic dates of the DEFA studio for animation, links to pictures of film covers, some scenes taken from animated films, and a special mention of the silhouette film as a genre the DEFA had been famous for. The film covers and pictures are taken from Rübner's private collection and seem to be geared toward an expert audience. He provides only the titles of films but does not elaborate on the films. His page about the history of the silhouette film is limited to the GDR era, leaving aside the long tradition of such silhouette films in Germany, such as Lotte Reiniger's Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed (1926). Instead, Rübner calls attention to the export success of the animated DEFA films and laments a decline in the quality of contemporary animated films due to their mass production abroad.

His comments may be interpreted as a nostalgic backdrop addressing generations of East Germans who – similar to Rübner – feel that the quality of films has gradually faded with the disappearance of the DEFA animated films and their replacement with Japanese animation. The films are privileged by positioning the book cover of Die Trickfabrik on the start page. This 2003 anthology about the history of animated DEFA film was awarded numerous prizes as an outstanding contribution to the history of the animated film. Rübner tries to establish DEFA films here as important element of German film culture by focusing on the outstanding quality of animation in DEFA films.

The web page about the weekly DEFA newsreel Der Augenzeuge contains only one page with a brief record of the beginnings of the program to its end as DEFA Wochenschau in 1980. Rübner stresses the concept of the weekly newsreel as historical documents of GDR history. He misjudges the political significance of the films as instruments of political propaganda when he points out how it fulfilled the audience's need for information and entertainment. This category functions as a confirmation of Rübner's status as DEFA expert, as he displays his knowledge about the Wochenschau.

Rübner's perpetual reminders of the significance of DEFA films in the past and present become even more evident in the category about DEFA fairytales. On the start page, Rübner elucidates on the dichotomy of the fairytales' success abroad and the negative responses to the films in the GDR. The films challenged GDR cultural politics with plots that relished romantic ideals, contrary to the ideals of official politics in the worker and peasant state.

Rübner targets audiences from West Germany with the fairytale category. DEFA fairytales were almost as popular in the FRG as they were in the GDR. Mentioning Walt Disney's admiration for a DEFA film supports the notion of these films as world class cinema. A page dedicated to DEFA's first fairytale, Das kalte Herz (Paul Verhoeven,

1950), emphasizes the technical expertise of the film crew. Rübner points out Walt Disney's admiration for the make-up crew. He accentuates the knowledge of DEFA employees who accomplished a convincing make-up job before computers were able to assist in the film production. The second page about the success of the fairytales expands the admiration of DEFA films with a closer look at the film Der kleine Muck (Wolfgang Staudte, 1953). The film has by far surpassed conventional audience figures with more than 100 million viewers worldwide. Rübner explains that this fairytale is not only the best DEFA film ever made, but also the most successful German language film ever.

Another well-regarded genre of DEFA, the children's film, receives only marginal attention given the international popularity of this film genre. The start page expresses Rübner's concerns about changes in German society affecting the reception of DEFA films. The fact that children's films are no longer regular features in movie theaters prompts Rübner to reflect on the role of the films as pedagogical tool "without the raised index finger" that showed unique ways to solve problems from the perspective of young people. A second page in this category lists seven films with their production dates and brief film synopses. Rübner's summaries resemble teasers, a strategy he uses to generate interest for children's films among the non-expert visitors to his website. His statement about the films as cultural legacy of the GDR is primarily aimed at East Germans who share his concerns about the need to preserve GDR cultural history.

The final two categories on Rübner's site contain some collages and a collection of autographed pictures by DEFA stars. Both are tailored towards fellow DEFA enthusiasts, since they are elements of fan cultures. Although they can be appreciated by other audiences less familiar with DEFA films, the collages open up the meaning of the films to fans familiar with the films. Rübner clipped pictures of DEFA actors and assembled their heads loosely on a page. He produced three of these collages, which do

not seem to follow a certain topic. Some pictures appear in more than one collage. Rübner scanned these collages and placed them on his web page to share with visitors. Rübner's web site about autographs of DEFA actors depicts scans of ten autographed postcards, some of which even feature a personal dedication to Rübner. By displaying the postcards publicly, Rübner seeks to establish a personal connection to the DEFA stars. The cards illustrate the longevity of his involvement with DEFA films. They are evidence of his prominent rank among other DEFA film enthusiasts. In lieu of fan conventions and exhibits, customary among other fan groups, this section also replaces such meetings when it shows Rübner's personal collection. The autographed postcards and his collages make a contribution to a permanent convention of DEFA fans in the virtual reality of the internet.

As only fellow DEFA enthusiasts are able to identify the actors, this collection serves as a visual document that produces an exclusive, yet shared online community of DEFA fans. Here, Benedict Anderson's notion of an "imagined community" comes into play in the context of DEFA fans. If one tests Anderson's hypothesis of the imagined community on Rübner's web site, it becomes evident that exactly this notion of community was intended by the web master of DEFA Fan.⁷² First, a community is "imagined because the members ... will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). This is especially true of the community of DEFA fans. They know that other fans of DEFA films exist, but they have not begun to organize themselves into fan clubs or even a larger online community of DEFA fans to channel their interests. Some DEFA fans visit web sites, but only a small part of them will communicate with others in online

⁷² Benedict Anderson defines the nation as imagined community, but his theory can as well be applied to other "imagined communities" such as cultural communities. DEFA fans are such a cultural community, and – as my study showed – may even be synonymous with contemporary East Germany, since the vast majority of DEFA audiences are from the East.

guest books and other discussion pages. Others, especially fans from older generations without access to the World Wide Web, only know a limited number of DEFA fans from their circle of family and friends. Yet, all of those enthusiasts know, or imagine, a larger number of DEFA fans. Second, the community is limited in its size (7). As I showed in the previous chapter, DEFA fans are only one group out of four in the larger group of DEFA audiences. Not all viewers of DEFA films are automatically fans. Some who attend the screenings are not aware that the films are DEFA films at all, while others come because they are primarily interested in the topic. Overall, the group of committed DEFA fans is small. Third and finally, “it is imagined as a community, because ... [it] is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). The small number of DEFA fans makes them an even more intimate and close-knit community because of its size. Since DEFA fandom at this point in time is taking place online, much of this comradeship occurs via means of online discussion.

Previous versions of the web site DEFA Fan offered a more expanded platform for the communication among audiences of DEFA films. An occasional newsletter kept them informed about film releases, screenings of DEFA films, and other news about the DEFA. Since 2004, there have been no newsletters, and during the last quarter of 2005, the automatic newsletter order form disappeared from the index page of DEFA Fan. According to the header of his last email newsletter, only three issues were published to fifteen people. The statistics of the monitoring service Webstats 4 U show that Rübner’s site is visited approximately twenty times per day, with more than 80% of the visitors originating in Germany (“My Statistics Summary” DEFA). Overall, it might be presumed that the lack of updates to his website drove visitors away.

The most illuminating exchange of DEFA fans took place in online guest books of Rübner’s web site. These were accessible from the category pages separate for each

topic. The entries ranged from comments about the information accessible on the web page over questions regarding DEFA films and actors to discussions between other fans about specific topics. Since March 2006, Jens Rübner has taken all guest books offline. According to his statement on the index page of DEFA Fan, he “had to delete too many messages” from these guest books. He regulated the communication between members in the past, for example when he removed an entry by a member who voiced her disappointment with an outrageous fee Rübner charged for a video duplicate from his private collection. The guest books, designed to foster communication among DEFA fans, were converted into self-affirmative documents of Rübner’s status as expert of DEFA films.

While the site is useful for an initial overview what DEFA cinema has to offer, the site has lost much of its initial appeal to DEFA enthusiasts. Updates to the page are merely cosmetic, adding little or no new information. The data the site provides often shows Rübner’s subjective opinion and confuses facts with opinions. After the disappearance of the guest books the site lacks the function of a networking tool to facilitate contact among fans; instead, the site has become an instrument for Rübner’s commercial services around DEFA films. It is no longer a place for DEFA fans to congregate and use the site’s guest books for their imagined community. DEFA-Fan lacks the required “horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 7) that is necessary to create the feeling of solidarity among the community of DEFA fans. Most of them, including Rübner himself⁷³, now frequent the other DEFA fan web site, DEFA Sternstunden.

⁷³ His name and email address appear in the guest books of DEFA-Sternstunden frequently.

DEFA STERNSTUNDEN

A second page, DEFA Sternstunden (<http://www.defa-sternstunden.de>), has taken on the form of a DEFA encyclopedia. Katrin and Uta Zutz from Neubrandenburg in East Germany started the page as a hobby in 2003. In a conversation with “Team Zutz,” as they call themselves on their web site, the two sisters told me they were born in the GDR and grew up with the DEFA fairytales, which eventually lead to their interest in DEFA series such as Zur See and films with the GDR star Agnes Kraus. “Team Zutz” have expanded their website in the past three years to become the primary choice for DEFA fans. Webstats 4 U lists on average 80 hits per day, which is four times as much as DEFA Fan (“My Statistics Summary” Sternstunden). The site itself looks very professional, is regularly updated, and has a clear focus on DEFA actors and DEFA films. Visitors have a choice of four main categories, and two options for participating in discussions either by writing in an online guest book or by signing up for a discussion forum. The categories *Geschichte* (History), *Filme* (Films), *Sterne* (Stars), and *Infos* are linked from the index page.

A brief introduction gives details about the goals of the site as a fan site. It is intended for friends of DEFA films and actors, created and maintained by fans. The site appeals to DEFA enthusiasts and newcomers, inviting them to browse the page and learn about DEFA cinema. DEFA Sternstunden focuses on the facts of DEFA films and actors, while it omits any interpretation of DEFA films as historic elements of the GDR. DEFA Sternstunden depicts DEFA cinema not as the national cinema of the GDR, but rather establishes the films as cineastic works constructed around stars. The focus on film stars helps newcomers not familiar with the DEFA oeuvre to understand the films. DEFA enthusiasts, on the other hand, rediscover well-known films by looking at them through the new perspective of the actors.

The category *Geschichte* introduces the history of the DEFA. It begins with the cultural situation in post-war Germany, describes in detail the requirements for a new beginning of German filmmaking, and shows the events leading to the founding of the DEFA in 1946. The page continues with the first decade of film production up to the integration of the DEFA in the political system of the GDR. Following a brief summary of the changing responsibilities at the studios between 1952 and 1962, the site covers the years of studio control by the *Hauptverwaltung Film*. The final paragraph about the history of the DEFA recaptures the privatization in 1990 and the eventual sale and following removal of the name DEFA from the Federal Register of companies. A final section entitled *Filmerbe* points to the DEFA legacy.

DEFA Sternstunden offers an extensive section on DEFA history to explain the socio-cultural context of films and stars. Since DEFA films may be unknown to many West Germans and younger generations, the web site explains the genesis of the studios step by step. It gives information for DEFA enthusiasts with an abundance of names and dates, allowing experts to test and expand their knowledge. An external link to the extended chronology available at the official web site of the DEFA-Stiftung rounds out the information. The category *Geschichte* thus provides a framework for the comprehension of DEFA films. It provides the information that is needed to understand the plot of DEFA films. Since the films were produced in the GDR, they require background knowledge about the country's history and culture. Especially younger generations and West Germans rely on this basic knowledge to profit from the website.

Entries about approximately 120 DEFA films are at the core of the category *Filme*. The category serves as an encyclopedic site devoted to the films produced by the DEFA. DEFA experts and novices receive detailed information in plain, jargon-free language. Most of the film descriptions deal with film productions for the cinema, but

Team Zutz plans to expand the list with TV productions. All titles are sorted alphabetically on the web page and are hyperlinked from there to the individual summaries. Each summary follows a standardized structure with production year and director. A list of actors, called *Sterne* (stars), follows at the end of each entry. The film stars are listed in order of their importance in the film with supporting actors after the lead characters. Sometimes, the entry is complemented by a synopsis, remarks regarding the production, or details about the reception of the film.

A similar category about *Sterne*, the DEFA stars, is at the center of the web site. More than 300 biographies of actors are organized alphabetically by last name. The hyperlinks lead to concise actor biographies and their filmographies, adapted from secondary sources. Photo and the birthdays complete each entry.

This particular part of the website targets both the expert DEFA fan and persons without knowledge about DEFA films. The encyclopedic alphabetical structure allows searches and random browsing for a visitor. Whereas people interested in obtaining information on DEFA Fan are required to follow a premeditated structure, DEFA Sternstunden puts the visitor in charge of choosing their information.

The final category, *Infos*, offers a wide array of sources, links, and screenings of DEFA films on German TV. This integrates DEFA films into post-unification German society because it illustrates the presence of the films in the Federal Republic and allows visitors to experience the films first hand. A list of bibliographic sources published between 1951 and 2004, predominantly in the GDR and East Germany, gives interested parties the source material to find more information about DEFA films and stars. It also comments on the strong regional affiliation of DEFA films, and states that the films are still the topic of academic research. The links featured on the same page are more broadly concerned with the popularity of the DEFA in the Federal Republic. Nine links

allow quick access to primary sources dealing with the DEFA, such as, for example, the DEFA Stiftung, Progress, Icestorm, and a hyperlink to the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv. A television guide for DEFA broadcasts is also provided and updated every two weeks, covering both films and series produced by the DEFA. For enthusiasts, the listings provide the opportunity to revisit familiar productions, while an occasional visitor may be encouraged to verify the information on the web site with a concrete example.

A central online guest book and a discussion forum allow the exchange of thoughts, ideas, and knowledge between users. Entries in the guest book are added immediately to the web site, resulting in a free and open communication. The forum is the dedicated medium for questions, answers, and discussions about DEFA films, but some overlap occurs, as occasionally visitors use the guest book to post questions.

The forum on DEFA Sternstunden is divided into three discussion areas about miscellaneous items, films, and actors. In April 2006, 61 registered users discussed topics about DEFA cinema. Postings are infrequent, often with weeks between entries. The discussion topics range from basic questions posted by non-experts that are usually answered by one entry, to specific discussions by film enthusiasts who are familiar with DEFA cinema. Thus, the forum serves as exchange of ideas and as a meeting place in virtual reality that initiates interest in DEFA films.

Newcomers and casual visitors to this web site tend to leave their comments in the guest book. They may be surprised about the facets the DEFA had, praise the amount of information, and inquire about further information on films, actors, or history. In contrast to the forum, where discussions between members take place, the guest book mainly serves as a quality indicator for Team Zutz. They receive their feedback about their web site through the guest book and respond to visitors the same way. Since the guest book is accessible to the public, it serves as a permanent question and answer section about the

web site, placing the fan work under frequent scrutiny by other fans. The control mechanism of peer comments visible in the guest book ensures quality work reviewed and critiqued openly by other experts of DEFA film.

DEFA fans do not have meetings, conventions, or journals. They are split into two major age groups. One of them uses the internet as a medium to show their attachment to the DEFA. This group of younger fans is a small circle of film enthusiasts who attend public film screenings, lectures, and are familiar with the latest developments around the DEFA. The second group consists of older fans that refer to magazines and books, the printed TV guide and the newspaper for information. They used to watch DEFA films and still do if they see them on TV. Members of this group have personal memories connected to the films. They gather in small circles with their friends on occasion and discuss DEFA films as one of many topics. DEFA fans are generally loose, unorganized interest groups that find themselves together only at film screenings. Both groups are separate and yet united in their interest for DEFA films.

The future of DEFA fandom appears to lie in the online community. At some point the older, passive generation of DEFA fans will not be alive anymore. It depends on the younger DEFA fans to promote a functioning DEFA fandom and carry their enthusiasm to cineastes that become fans because of their fascination for films from the East German past.

CONCLUSION

At this point, the DEFA fan base is still very small in size and fan “activities,” and one can only speculate about whether the growth of DEFA fandom would help popularize DEFA films to a larger audience. Certainly, further public exposure could broaden the audience of DEFA films and reach Germans who are unaware of DEFA’s

tradition in post-unification Germany. Once set in motion, new interest in the films would not only result in a wider interest, which in turn might lead to more DEFA films on TV at convenient times and to an increase in DEFA films on DVD, it would also create awareness of DEFA and – as a direct result – of the GDR past as part of German history.

There is potential for such growth of DEFA fan culture. While DEFA fan culture will probably never take on the shape of other fan cultures, it could develop in its very unique way as a voice of a German past. DEFA films are simply too diverse to be celebrated within the limits of traditional fandom: the DEFA oeuvre consists of a variety of genres and was produced throughout more than 40 years; most films are also not spectacular enough to warrant a large fan base. In a certain way, the former GDR film clubs could be the model for smaller fan clubs of individual genres, i.e. the fairytales, the *Indianerfilme*, or the DEFA science-fiction films; these clubs could organize film screenings, invite DEFA veterans and experts for lectures and discussions.

Eventually, a blossoming fan culture might broaden the fan base from predominantly East Germans to interest more West Germans in DEFA films. The films are an invented tradition that symbolizes the cultural memory of East Germans; thus, it appeals to them, although it might deter potential West German fans who feel excluded. As the tradition becomes established in German society, however, and the audience of DEFA film includes the younger generations who grew up in a unified Germany, the focus of the tradition will change. In the future, the distinction between East and West Germans should play a much less significant role than it does for the current generations. Because of their integration in German culture and their traditional character as representations of East German history, DEFA films could become an important cultural medium for future generations of Germans.

Conclusion

DEFA is still alive in Germany. Although DEFA no longer exists as a company, its legacy lives on through DEFA films on TV and DVD, in movie theaters and print media, and on fan sites on the World Wide Web. DEFA continues to be promoted as a “virtual” cultural institution by the federally funded DEFA-Stiftung and DEFA’s other successors, which, within the few years since their inauguration, have invented and established DEFA films as an East German tradition. The films have become increasingly popular thanks to the positive reception of DEFA films by their audiences, who have embraced them as remnants of their past, repositories of their personal memories, and parts of Germany’s cultural memory. This popularity has only continued to rise with the introduction of DEFA films on DVD. The first post-unification generation of young Germans has also begun to voice interest in the films as historical depictions of their parents’ past. DEFA films have become more than just regional entertainment for East Germans; they are now representations of a GDR past situated within the larger framework of German history and culture.

This dissertation proposed a model to interpret the “afterlife” of cultural institutions with the method of cultural archeology. Tracing the dismantling and reconstitution of a cultural institution as invented tradition, this study took into account the multiple parties and perspectives that participated in this transformative process. The results of this diachronic analysis of the old and new forms of the institution allowed for a comparison of the changing roles of an institution. In the specific case of DEFA, I examined the institutional history, changes before and after German unification, and the integration of DEFA’s legacy into post-*Wende* culture. I approached DEFA as a cultural institution, including the exact steps of a cultural institution’s transformation and its

eventual integration into culture. Furthermore, I studied the influence of this cultural makeover and its impact on a particular social group of Germans to provide a synchronic analysis of an institution and the culture in which this institution functioned. In my final chapter, I explored DEFA and its role in post-unification Germany via the audiences and fans of the films.

In addition to providing detailed information about DEFA after unification, which opened up future approaches of DEFA scholarship to include the post-unification context, there is at least one larger implication of this study that comments on the future of the relationship between East and West Germans. This dissertation has explored, in the context of the invented tradition of DEFA films, how strained relations between East and West were caused by misunderstandings, misinterpretation, and miscommunication of each other's expectations regarding German unification. DEFA films raised awareness for cultural products from the other Germany, and showed that these products were all parts of German history and culture, regardless of the fact that they originated in the East. A new generation of Germans have demonstrated a curiosity and a willingness to learn from the "other" past, asking how other cultural products of the GDR have been transformed and perpetuated in the present society. DEFA films have acted as a catalyst in the project of determining the DEFA's legacy and cultural meaning in the post-unification environment.

As the first attempt to situate the DEFA in post-unification society, this project should serve as a starting point for future endeavors. Closer readings of the most popular DEFA films among German audiences, for example, would provide a thorough, more nuanced study of the audience psychology of DEFA films, as would be the investigation of potential relationships between film genres, motivations, and age of the audience. Aside from the current audience reception of DEFA films, a rewarding topic would also

be a comparative look at developments in the German TV market in regard to the relation of the current on-screen appearances of DEFA films, West German films, and Nazi films.

This dissertation's usefulness is not limited to scholars of German cinema and cultural studies; it could also provide a practical approach for the study of other national and regional cinemas in transition to discuss their development and their struggles after watershed changes in their political and cultural environment; the role of Eastern European cinemas, for example, would benefit from such an analysis, since their democratization efforts coincided for the most part with that of the GDR. Their societies – built upon the Soviet model as communist satellite states all over Eastern Europe – show parallels to developments in East Germany after unification. Certainly, DEFA cinema had a somewhat unusual situation, since it was “terminated” from the outside when it was privatized and sold, whereas other national cinemas were reformed. Also, DEFA cinema is now a closed chapter of history, invented as tradition, while other Eastern European cinemas still exist. For them, the old films of the communist regime are still a chapter of their history without the need to be reintroduced into society as invention. Their filmmakers continued to make films, perhaps with an altered focus due to changes in their cultural environment and the disappearance of strict rules on artistic production.

Film scholar Dina Iordanova, among others, has used similar methodological approaches to examine the intersection of films and their cultural environment at various historical stages. Her studies on the cinemas of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, however, have been criticized for the rather brief treatment of developments in the post-communist eras of the countries, which reflects the difficulties scholars face in their research about contemporary societies and current tendencies. And yet, such studies of other Eastern European cinemas would reveal interesting results,

perhaps similar to this dissertation. In Bulgaria, for example, some newspapers started to release classic films of Bulgarian cinema as weekly DVD inserts, similar to the practices of Germany's SuperIllu. Although there are no concrete statistics, at least one Bulgarian has stated that these films are very popular among young people and are often collected assiduously. As these two examples show, there is much work that remains to be done, surveying other Eastern European societies for comparable tendencies and contextualizing this study in a more universal context with a look at societies via their cinemas.

Readers not familiar with German cinema will find the various narratives and the interchangeable structure of the dissertation useful. The basic information about the DEFA and its role in Germany is collected in only one place and accessible in English. The dissertation can be used as introduction to the current landscape of German media, to get a brief introduction to the ties of film and politics in the GDR, or learn about the history of a German film studio. Experts of DEFA cinema could take this new approach to the DEFA into account for their research. The dissertation contributes to DEFA scholarship a new approach: reading the DEFA as part of a contemporary culture in the Federal Republic after 1992. The results from the cultural archeological field work, especially the collection of surveys and interviews, can be applied to for new theories about the role of the former GDR in post-unification Germany. Eventually the dissertation could contribute to expand the still somewhat narrow field of English language scholarship on the GDR film company.

Amount and density of details in this study along with its non-linear structure may initially get in the way of seeing the project's contribution to the entire field of cultural studies. The advantage of a variety of approaches and different narratives lies in the fact that a greater number of scholars working in cultural studies will be able to apply some of

the strategies. The model wants to encourage others to follow my example to use cultural archeology in order to find more traces of past cultures in the present time, which then can be compared and contrasted to their meaning in their original environments. Understanding the analogies between these two instances of a cultural phenomenon is the first step towards accepting and integrating elements from other cultures into our own.

In other words, this study provides strategies on how to interpret or define a “culture” within another culture. The dissertation intends to serve as a model for new ways to pursue studies of a culture via its interdisciplinary approach beyond the confinements of a historical study, an audience-reception study, and a minority study. It may be especially useful for minority studies and any other field that requires looking at culture in a similar Russian doll-setting. Although this dissertation can by no means provide the answer to all cultural studies, it can stimulate ideas on how to approach similar projects.

It is my hope that the final result of this dissertation is more than the sum of its parts. Often we view culture as part of belonging to only one system, for example to an ideological system of either West Germany or East Germany, to a social system of white collar or blue collar, or to a political system of either conservative or progressive. In reality, the results of this dissertation showed that culture is much more than a matter of black or white: it functions in all configurations and variations. Surely some parts of culture may be frequented predominantly by followers of a certain system, but culture is never exclusive or limited to just one social group. Academics follow “their” sports teams with the same fervor as the person cleaning the floors in the academic’s office, and the same janitor may enjoy a performance of classical music or be an expert in American War novels. In the same vein, DEFA films are not limited to nostalgic, unemployed East

Germans who vote for parties of the far left and long for the return of the GDR. Culture is diverse, and so is the afterlife of the DEFA.

APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORMS

Short Consent Form

The Afterlife of *DEFA* Films

IRB PROTOCOL # 2004-06-0081

Conducted by Sebastian Heiduschke
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You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time by simply telling the researcher.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the significance of *DEFA* films in today's Germany.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- complete a four-page questionnaire about your contact with *DEFA* films
- with your specific consent you will participate in a follow-up interview about your personal experiences with *DEFA* films

Total estimated time to participate in study is between ten minutes and three hours, depending on your consent for a follow-up interview.

Risks and Benefits of being in the study

- **slight risk of emotional stress, triggered by personal memories**
- **recollection and reflection of your memories**

Compensation:

- You will not be compensated for your participation

The **records** of this study will be stored securely and kept private. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, and members of the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the **confidentiality** of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject.

The interviews or sessions will be audio or videotaped. The tapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. The tapes will be kept in a secure place, and will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates. The recordings will be retained for possible future analysis.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later or want additional information, call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 232-4383.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

We may wish to present some of the tapes from this study at scientific conventions or as demonstrations in classrooms. Please sign below if you are willing to allow us to do so with your tape.

I hereby give permission for the video (audio) tape made for this research study to be also used for educational purposes.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Information zur Studie und Einverständniserklärung

Das Nachleben von *DEFA* Filmen

IRB PROTOCOL # 2004-06-0081

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Vielen Dank, dass Sie sich bereit erklärt haben, an dieser Studie teilzunehmen. Dieses Formular soll Ihnen Auskunft über die Studie geben. Bitte lesen Sie die Informationen und stellen Sie Fragen bevor Sie sich zur Teilnahme entschließen. Ihre Teilnahme ist freiwillig. Sie können sich gegen die Teilnahme entschließen, ohne einen Vor- oder Nachteil zu haben. Sie können die Teilnahme jederzeit abbrechen, indem Sie es mir mitteilen.

Zweck dieser Studie ist herauszufinden, welchen Stellenwert *DEFA* Filme in der heutigen Gesellschaft besitzen.

Sollten Sie sich zur Teilnahme an dieser Studie entschließen, werden Sie folgende Dinge tun:

- einen vierseitigen Fragebogen über Ihren Kontakt mit *DEFA* Filmen ausfüllen
- bei Interesse an einem Nachfolgeinterview über Ihre persönlichen Erfahrungen mit *DEFA* Filmen teilnehmen

Der Zeitaufwand für die Studie beträgt zwischen 10 Minuten und 3 Stunden, je nachdem ob Sie am Nachfolgeinterview teilnehmen oder nicht.

Risiken und Vorteile für Sie in dieser Studie:

- leichter emotionaler Stress, ausgelöst durch persönliche Erinnerungen
- Aufarbeitung und Reflexion Ihrer Erinnerungen

Entschädigung

- Leider ist keine materielle Entschädigung möglich.

Die **Ergebnisse** dieser Studie werden sicher verwahrt und unterliegen der Geheimhaltungspflicht.

Authorisierte Personen der *University of Texas at Austin*, sowie Mitglieder der universitätsinternen Kommission zur Kontrolle dieser Studie besitzen das Recht, die Aufzeichnungen und Dokumente einzusehen. Sie sind im Rahmen des Gesetzes verpflichtet, diese Dokumente vertraulich zu behandeln. Alle Veröffentlichungen schließen Informationen aus, die Sie als Teilnehmer identifizieren könnten.

Die Nachfolgeinterviews können mit Ihrem Einverständnis in Bild und Ton aufgezeichnet werden. Die Bänder werden mit Codes versehen, so dass keine persönlichen Informationen offen sichtbar sind. Alle Bänder werden an einem sicheren Ort aufbewahrt. Die Bänder werden nur vom Forscherteam zu Auswertungszwecken abgespielt.

Kontaktinformationen und Fragen

Bitte stellen Sie jetzt Ihre Fragen über die Studie. Falls sie zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt Fragen haben oder zusätzliche Informationen wünschen, kontaktieren Sie bitte die Forscher, welche die Studie durchführen. Ihre Namen, Telefonnummern, und e-mail Adressen finden Sie am Anfang dieses Dokuments.

Sollten Sie Fragen zu Ihren Rechten als Teilnehmer dieser Studie haben, kontaktieren Sie bitte Dr. Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, 1-(512) 232-4383.

Sie erhalten eine Kopie dieser Informationen für Ihre Unterlagen.

Einverständniserklärung:

Ich nehme die obigen Informationen zur Kenntnis und besitze genügend Informationen, um eine Entscheidung über meine Teilnahme an dieser Studie zu treffen. Hiermit stimme ich der Teilnahme an der Studie zu.

Unterschrift: _____ Datum: _____

Datum: _____
Unterschrift des Forschers

(optional)

Wir möchten die Ergebnisse auf Kongressen und Tagungen vorstellen. Um Audio- oder Videoaufzeichnungen verwenden zu dürfen, möchten wir Sie um folgende Genehmigung bitten.

Ich erteile außerdem die Genehmigung, dass Aufzeichnungen meines Interviews zu Studienzwecken verwendet werden dürfen.

Unterschrift: _____ Datum: _____

Appendix B: Questionnaires

The Afterlife of *DEFA* Films
Sebastian Heiduschke, Ph.D. Candidate
The University of Texas at Austin (USA)

Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation in my study about the afterlife of *DEFA* films. Please answer the following questions. If you do not want to or are unable to answer a question you may leave it blank. In some cases you will be required to provide your own answer in a blank space. If you would like to participate in a follow-up interview please provide your name and address. Your personal data will be treated confidentially and will not be provided to a third party.

Before you begin with this questionnaire, please complete the short consent form (on a separate page). Provide your initials in part A. This will allow me to classify your answers later on. Proceed to part B. Part C is optional. If you would like to participate in a follow-up interview (an informal talk with me), please provide your contact information in part C.

Please talk to me now if you have further questions. Thank you again for your valuable information.

Part A: Classification

1. Your Initials (only to classify your answers)

Part B: Questions

2. When did you see your first *DEFA* film? _____
3. What was the title of the film? _____
4. Approximately how many *DEFA* films do you watch per year?

5. How many other feature films (from the US, from the FRG, etc.) do you watch per year?
6. Why are you interested in *DEFA* films? _____

7. Why do you still watch *DEFA* films nowadays?

8. Which *DEFA* film is your favorite? _____

9. Describe why you like this film so much _____

10. Where do you usually watch *DEFA* films (movie theater, TV, video, DVD) and how would you describe your viewing habits?

Movie Theater _____%

TV _____%

VHS/ DVD _____%

Other (please provide): _____%

11. Where do you usually watch other films? Please provide the same viewing habits here.

Movie Theater _____%

TV _____%

VHS/ DVD _____%

Other (please provide): _____%

12. Why did you watch this *DEFA* film today? _____

13. Are you a member of a *DEFA* club, fan club, or do you participate in online discussions about the *DEFA* on the internet?

14. Do you think that *DEFA* films are important today? Why or why not?

15. Would you like to add something to *DEFA* films, the *DEFA*, provide your memories or thoughts?

Part C (optional): Contact Information

16. Name, First Name

17. Street, Number _____

18. ZIP, Place, Country _____

19. Phone: _____

20. E-mail: _____

21. Age _____

22. Place of Birth, Country, Country (at the time of your birth)

23. Residence **before** 1989 (incl. country and country)

24. Male ☐ Female ☐ (please check)

25. Highest degree (technical school, vocational school, college....)

26. Profession

27. Nationality _____

Studie zum Nachleben der DEFA Filme
Sebastian Heiduschke, Doktorand
The University of Texas at Austin (USA)

Fragebogen

Vielen Dank, dass Sie sich bereit erklärt haben, mich mit meiner Untersuchung zum Nachleben von *DEFA* Filmen zu unterstützen. Bitte beantworten Sie die folgenden Fragen. Wenn Sie eine Frage nicht beantworten möchten oder nicht beantworten können, lassen Sie diese bitte frei. Schreiben Sie Ihren Kommentar bitte in die vorgesehene Lücke. Wenn Sie mit einem Nachfolgeinterview einverstanden sind, geben Sie bitte Ihren Namen und Ihre Adresse an. Ihre Daten werden vertraulich behandelt und nicht an Dritte weitergegeben.

Bevor Sie mit der Beantwortung der Fragen beginnen, bestätigen Sie bitte, dass Sie freiwillig an dieser Umfrage teilnehmen (auf separatem Blatt). Diese Daten sind wichtig, um Ihren Fragebogen auswerten zu können. Gehen Sie dann zu den Fragen in Teil B. Teil C ist optional und für diejenigen Teilnehmer gedacht, die an einem ausführlichem Gespräch mit mir interessiert sind.

Sollten Sie Fragen haben, wenden Sie sich bitte an mich. Noch einmal herzlichen Dank für Ihre wertvollen Antworten.

Teil A: Klassifizierung

1. Ihre Initialen (nur zur Klassifikation Ihrer Antworten notwendig) _____

Teil B: Fragenkatalog

2. In welchem Jahr haben Sie Ihren ersten *DEFA* Film gesehen? _____
3. Welcher *DEFA* Film war das? _____
4. Ungefähr wie viele *DEFA* Filme sehen Sie in etwa pro Jahr?

5. Wie viele andere Spielfilme (aus den USA, aus der BRD etc.) sehen Sie pro Jahr?
6. Was interessiert Sie an *DEFA* Filmen? _____
7. Warum sehen Sie jetzt noch *DEFA* Filme? _____
8. Welches ist Ihr Lieblingsfilm der *DEFA*? _____
9. Beschreiben Sie bitte warum dieser Film Ihnen so gut gefällt _____

10. Wo sehen Sie gewöhnlich *DEFA* Filme (z.B. Kino, TV, VHS oder DVD) und wie verteilen sich ihre Sehgewohnheiten prozentual?

Kino _____ %

TV _____ %

VHS/ DVD _____ %

Anderer Ort (bitte angeben): _____ %

11. Wo sehen Sie gewöhnlich andere Filme? Bitte geben Sie auch hier eine Prozentzahl an.

Kino _____ %

TV _____ %

VHS/ DVD _____ %

Anderer Ort (bitte angeben): _____ %

12. Warum sehen Sie heute diesen Film? _____

13. Sind Sie ein Mitglied in einem *DEFA* Verein, Fanclub, oder nehmen Sie an Diskussionen über die *DEFA* im Internet teil?

14. Denken Sie, dass *DEFA* Filme wichtig in der heutigen Zeit sind? Warum oder warum nicht?

15. Möchten Sie noch einen weiteren Kommentar zu *DEFA* Filmen, der *DEFA* selbst, Ihre Erinnerungen oder Gedanken zur DDR abgeben?

Teil C (optional): Persönliche Daten

16. Name, Vorname _____

17. Straße, Hausnummer

18. Postleitzahl, Ort, ggf. Land _____

19. Telefonnummer: _____

20. E-Mail Adresse: _____

21. Alter _____

22. Geburtsort, Kreis, Land (z.Zt. Ihrer Geburt) _____

23. Wohnort **vor** 1989 (inkl. Kreis oder Land) _____

24. Männlich ☐ Weiblich ☐ (bitte ankreuzen)

25. Höchster Schulabschluss (POS, EOS, Universität....) _____

26. Beruf _____

27. Nationalität _____

Appendix C: Survey Results Questionnaires

See next page

Number	Sex	East/West	Age	First DEFA Film	Title	# of DEFA films per year	# of other films per year	Why interested in DEFA films	Why still watching DEFA films
1	f	w	64	?	?	?	5-6	historic context	historic interest
2	f	w	30	?	?	?	30	historic films	historic interest
3	f	e	39	1972	Children's film	12	15	plot, acting	quality of plot and acting
4	m	e	74	1948	Mörder sind...	?	10	?	?
5	m	w	63	?	?	?	5-6	part of German history	part of German history
6	m	w	39	?	?	20	20	GDR everyday and cultural history	GDR everyday and cultural history
7	f	e	41	1973	Fairytale	5	50	?	Pleasant memories come back
8	m	e	62	1952	Mörder sind...	2	8	contemporary history, actors	memories of the past
9	m	w	58	?	Werner Holt	10	60	contemporary history, actors	contemporary history, actors
10	f	w	62	1995	Spur der Steine	5-10	10-15	topica	need after the Wende
11	f	w	33	2001	Jakob der L.	3-4	20	special point of view in DEFA films, slow pace	personal interest, also interest in GDR
12	m	BELGIUM	53	?	?	?	?	?	?
13	f	FRANCE	65	2004	Die Flucht	?	?	interest	topic
14	f	FRANCE	32	2001	?	2-3	15	dealing with past	personal interest
15	f	w	56	1965	Geteilte Himmel	23	?	events and interest at time of filming	events and interests at time of filming
16	f	e	62	1958	?	3-4	25	political statements, hidden message	personal "other" point of view, namely west German experiences
17	m	e	75	1948	Mörder sind...	3-4	20-25	realistic depiction	coming to terms with past
18	m	e	64	1952	Das kalte Herz	2	10	?	memories
19	f	e	63	1954	?	2	10	own character - GDR	memories and history of GDR
20	m	e	42	1968	Singende klingende Bäumchen	5	50	nostalgia, criticism of society if recognizable	they are good
21	?	?	?	1965	Fairytale	10	40	common history, deeper plots	I can find myself in them more than in others
22	f	e	?	1994	Das kalte Herz	8	24	plot	I like them
23	f	e	63	1953	?	6	50	topica, actors, directors	memories, interest
24	m	e	45	1963	Children's film or Indianerfilm	5-6	230	actors, depiction of the GDR	depiction of GDR
25	m	e	47	?	?	3	50	why forbidden film, memories	I still like critical films, partly children's films
26	f	?	65	1950	bin	3	10	hidden criticism of the regime	distraction
27	f	?	?	1950	?	10	80	GDR everyday history	memories
28	f	e	41	1966	Der kleine Muck	2	40	life in the GDR	interest
29	f	e	65	1955	Mörder sind...	2	35	technical realization	?
30	m	e	66	1947	Mörder sind...	2	40	films of the GDR	memories
31	f	e	29	1981	?	20	60	history/ thinking back then/ coming to terms with past	history/ thinking back then/ coming to terms with past
32	m	e	21	?	?	4	25	?	interest
33	f	?	67	1954-1956	?	10	?	actors, problems	actors, problems
34	f	e	66	1957	?	?	?	history	against the forgetting
35	m	?	34	1973	Der kleine Muck	1-2	100	past	nostalgia
36	f	?	28	1981	certainly a fairytale	3	70	everything	curiosity
37	m	?	25	?	?	1-10	10-100	GDR	pastime
38	f	?	?	1995	Solo Sunny	2	15	plot, illustration of GDR history	interested in plot and GR history
39	?	?	?	1960	?	2-3	25-30	?	by accident, was part of DHM cinema program
40	?	?	?	1996	Paul und Paula	0-1	6	old Berlin, history of the GDR	old Berlin, history of the GDR
41	m	w	37	?	?	?	30	?	?
42	f	e	46	1964	König Drosselbart	6	10	certain actors, memories, good films can be seen more than once	certain actors, memories, good films can be seen more than once
43	?	?	?	2002	Paul und Paula	1	80	to learn more about life in the GDR	learn more about life in the GDR
44	m	w	36	2002	Paul und Paula	1	60	dealing with GDR, for me as someone from the West very alien	?
45	?	?	?	1993	Coming Out/ Paul und Paula	15-30	150-200	Ph.D. work/ interest	Ph.D. work
46	f	Italy	32	?	?	?	20-30	?	historic interest
47	m	e	74	1948	Mörder sind...	?	50	problems, history, perhaps actors	because they are screened again
48	m	e	49	1965	König Drosselbart	5	50	good plot	history
49	f	e	70	1948	Der Kahn der fröhlichen Leute	3-4	20	better plot, older actors (Delmare, Frohripp)	because of the older actors
50	m	e	43	1972	Das kalte Herz	5	60	good children's films	well known actors
51	f	e	42	1973	Bärin	4-5	100	good plots	well known actors
52	m	e	46	1970	Die Söhne der großen Bärin	4-5	50	ethical norms	nostalgia
53	f	e	28	1969	Das singende, klingende Bäumchen	4-5	50-60	plot, historical character	OSTALGIE

Favorite DEFA Film	Describe why favorite	DEFA films in cinema	DEFA films on TV	DEFA films on tape	DEFA films somewhere else	Other films in cinema	other films on TV
?	?	?	?	?	?	90	10
?	?	?	?	?	?	80	20
?	quality of plot and acting	100	0	0	0	100	0
Jakob der Lügner	?	100	0	0	0	100	0
Mörder sind...	not an aesthetic piece of art but a political and moral sign	100	0	0	0	100	0
Untertan	merciless characterization of German belief in authorities	100	0	0	0	90	0
?	?	5	90	5	0	5	90
Spur der Steine	criticism of time	5	95	0	0	2	98
Spur der Steine	amazing style of living	80	20	0	0	90	10
Fallada-letztes Kapitel	actors	100	0	0	0	100	0
Sonnensucher	older film, creates special mood	100	0	0	0	95	0
?	hits the mark of an unsolved problem	?	?	?	?	90	10
?	?	?	?	?	?	50	50
Die Flucht	shows human controversies in a personal way	100	0	0	0	80	20
Schlösser und Katen	Zeitgeist/ history/ change of political systems/ actors	80	20	0	0	70	30
Solo Sunny	unconventional approach	60	40	0	0	70	30
Affaire Blum	typical German fate in Nazi time	40	60	0	0	60	40
Auf der Sonnenseite	close relation to life	50	50	0	0	20	80
Spur der Steine	close relation to life, actor Manfred Krug played a great character role in the	10	90	0	0	20	80
?	?	50	50	0	0	10	90
?	?	10	90	0	0	20	80
Paul und Paula	?	1	70	10	0	20	10
none	?	30	60	10	0	30	60
Paul und Paula	good actors, imaginative plot	80	20	0	0	3	95
Karla	I was student in the GDR with my own opinion	20	0	80	0	20	0
?	irony	?	?	?	?	5	90
Spur der Steine	?	5	90	5	0	10	90
Nackt unter Wölfen	?	50	50	0	0	50	48
Spur der Steine	it is the attempt to depict life, also criticism of the system	30	70	0	0	10	90
Spur der Steine	role of Manfred Krug	2	20	?	?	40	60
Solo Sunny	history of this woman not just "normal"	20	80	0	0	10	80
Paul und Paula	did not know it	25	25	50	0	40	20
Indianerfilme	I experienced the problems partially	?	98	?	?	?	90
?	?	0	50	50	0	60	40
Blauvogel	demanding, full of atmosphere	5	90	5	0	20	30
Solo Sunny, all fairytales	?	?	?	0	0	?	?
?	?	80	20	0	0	90	10
Emil in the Advertising Column	stories of outsiders	100	0	0	0	98	0
?	shows the past	100	0	0	0	100	0
Spur der Steine	attempt to illustrate a situation in the GDR in a real way	100	0	0	0	95	0
?	?	?	?	?	?	70	30
Die Beunruhigung	topic and realization by Christine Schorn	80	20	0	0	80	10
?	it is possible to see a lot of the prevailing mood	50	0	50	0	50	40
Die Architekten	I am architect, comparison of GDR time and today (today is not great either)	50	0	50	0	50	50
Christine	very beautiful film, in addition, from its own production history strongly coined (remained unfinished)	40	0	50	10 (Archiv)	60	0
?	?	10	?	?	?	80	35
Hauptmann von Köln	it characterizes wittily and to the point the role of the Nazis in the FRG	?	?	?	?	50	50
fairytales	they communicate educational values	0	50	50	0	20	50
Das unsichtbare Visier/ Wolf unter Wölfen	the plot was very exciting	0	100	0	0	0	100
Zur See	series with good plot and good actors	80	20	0	10	80	10
?	?	1	80	19	0	10	80
Drei Haselnüsse für Aschenbrödel	good actors, romantic plot	0	10	90	0	20	50

other films on tape	other films somewhere else	Why this film today	Member of DEFA fan club	DEFA films important, reasons	Other commentary
0	0	0never seen, 1946 as year of production	n	they belong to the history of the Federal Republic	n
0	0	0works with the exhibit "Mythen der Nation"	n	historical coming to terms	n
0	0	0historic interest	n	quality of plot and acting	n
0	0	0to review own memories, as contrast to film "Der Untergang"	?	among other things: as guide for beginning directors	n
0	0	0?	n	?	n
0	0	0"classic", wanted to see it again	n	important documents of GDR everyday and social history	n
5	0	0never seen	n	new perspective now: how we lived in GDR, comparison to now	n
0	0	0reminds of war and post war time	n	opposition to US films	n
0	0	0topic of "Morder sind unter uns"	n	all films dealing with contemporary history are important	DEFA films are an important and interesting chapter in German (film) history
0	0	0interested in treatment of topic	n	part of film history, need to be shown again and again	n
5	0	0topic "escape" is of special interest to me	n	?	n
0	0	0coincidence	n	coming to terms with unsolved problems: societal, psychological	n
0	0	0topic	n	?	n
0	0	0actor Mueller-Stahl	n	topics are still up-to-date	n
0	0	0Zeitgeist/ history/ change of political systems/ actors	n	memories of DEFA times, circumstances	n
0	0	0curiosity	n	?	n
0	0	0because it was forbidden by the ZK	n	coming to terms with past and the courage of authors and directors	n
0	0	0curiosity	n	yes	n
0	0	0interested in past, dialogues, etc.	n	yes	n
0	0	0interested why this film was forbidden	n	yes, they show how we lived back then and how we dealt with censorship	n
0	0	0interested in critical evaluation of GDR situation	n	yes, they "conserve" the history of the GDR	n
30	0	0I liked the content of ideas	n	yes, they are more "natural" and evaluate critically society. Better identification	"Emil in the Advertising Pillar": wonderful children's film! Unfortunately nobody produces such films anymore
10	0	0actors, director, plot	n	yes, they reflect the time (GDR) that is also part of my life	I am happy these films are not forgotten, I am surprised and astonished and I like that you are working so intensively with them
2	0	0because of the Film club that always has a good selection of non-commercial films	n	depends on the film	Similar to current films or films made in the US or the FRG there are good and not so good. It's a pity that many (too many) DEFA films were influenced propagandistically. Even though I (admittedly) see that only today this way...
80	0	0because it was forbidden	n	they are important historical documents, why were some films forbidden?	I am surprised to see what some DEFA directors or actors dared to do despite the STASI
5	0	0?	n	so history is not forgotten	n
0	0	0?	?	?	n
2	0	0interest	n	cultural legacy	n
0	0	0interested in actors	n	yes, if they are thematically significant	n
0	0	0because it was forbidden	n	we grew up with it	n
10	0	0interest	n	yes because one can understand learn	n
40	0	0did not know it yet, sounded good	n	yes, more realistic depiction of society, historically exciting	they are better aesthetically, especially the children's films are far better, a lot more caring
?	?	0advertisement	n	yes, they illustrate life in the GDR, although often blurred. Therefore commentaries are important	n
0	0	0curiosity	n	important to a part, teach values and illustrate manipulations and history	n
50	0	0meeting with friends	n	yes, is a part of my own history and that of society	n
0	0	0recommended by a friend	n	yes, important. Culture of a time, documents of art, nice to watch	n
0	0	0description was interesting	n	not very	n
2	0	0interest, and I have a sale booth	n	important. Show history of that time. Awareness of that should not get lost	n
0	0	0because I go to this movie theater a lot	n	films criticizing the society are always important	n
5	0	0historic interest, fits into Berlin	n	own style of DEFA films, view not only entertainment	n
0	0	0my girlfriend took me	n	historical document	n
10	0	0because I saw it approx. 15 yrs ago	n	good films are important, other reason maybe also historic document	n
10	0	0coincidence	n	part of German history that should also be important to Westis	n
0	0	0I am architect, comparison of GDR time and today (today is not great either)	n	yes, only that way changes can be noticed	n
40	0	0academic reasons	i	yes, in them or through them, this history may be experienced, it is also very interesting because of cinematic reasons	n
5	0	0personal interest. I am working on an exhibit about 0Marzahn	n	yes, because it is possible at times to see what it was like in the GDR	I am from Italy, and since 2002 I am interested in everyday culture of the former GDR
0	0	0found it in the program, interested in architecture, did not know it was a DEFA film	n	yes, they help to remember what we are supposed to forget about the wall and the Stasi, according to the cliché of the rulers now	n
30	0	0memories of childhood and youth	n	yes, it is especially important for children to communicate educational values. This is not tied to DEFA films, every good film is important	GDR films always strove to influence positively. Values such as "good", "bad", "respect", were communicated
0	0	0because current films are not as interesting	n	probably important for us older people because memories are tied to them	No, that time is over now
0	0	0children's films because of memories	n	they are important because they are a part of our lives (childhood, youth)	n
10	0	0?	n	are important, were well made. National actors	n
30	0	0?	n	yes, they are not as superficial, are more ethical and a part of history	Socialism was, compared to the current society, the humanistic idea. Unfortunately, one underestimated egoism and material thinking of people and so spoiled a good idea for the future 100 years. There was a bunch of ideals which is realized in DEFA film
25	0	0?	n	yes, they belong to the history of the former GDR	The only thing I know is that the FRG is no ideal solution either. I was only 13 at the time of the Wende

54f	e	38	1972	König Drosselbart	2-3	a lot	former GDR actors, plot	because they had good fairytales
55m	e	23	1985	Schneewittchen	2	75	?	?
56f	e	78	1949-1950	Die Buntkäsearten	2	3	?	own experiences, reality
57f	e	70	1950	Ehe im Schatten	2	2	they show my time, coming to terms with fascism, Krug (actor)	because many are still are again important
58f	e	73	1948	Mörder sind...	2	2	reflexion of life quality, actors	to review
59m	e	73	1950	Mörder sind...	1	4	quality	to review
60f	e	71	1950	Mörder sind...	1	4	quality	to review
61f	e	83	1950	Die Buntkäsearten	10	10	plot, actors	plot, actors
62m	e	22	1987	Fairyale	4	70	plot	plot
63f	e	68	1948	Ehe im Schatten	2	2	directing, actors, plot (antifascism, GDR birth, criticism of GDR)	directing, actors, plot (antifascism, GDR birth, criticism of GDR)
64m	e	65?		Rat der Götter	3	7	realistic and political expression, artistically good	realistic, political expression, artistically valuable
65f	e	70	1950s	?	4-6	whatever I like	the basic idea	well done
66f	e	69	1950?	?	4	?	actors	they are good
67f	e	59	1950	Carola Lambert	6	2	topics, actors, old views (cities, buildings)	topics, actors, old views (cities, buildings)
68f	w	53	1957?	?	7	52	realistic expression, artistically good	good
69m	?	75	1946?	?	20	40	actors	they are good
70m	e	89	1947	Untertan	5	500	actors, plot	actors, plot
71f	?	?	1960	Untertan	10	100	plot	plot
72f	e	89?	?	?	2	?	problems	good actors, good directing
73f	e	75	1947	Mörder sind...	0	2-3	historical accurate depiction	they are offered
74m	e	19	1989	Das kalte Herz	4	100	realization	because they are good (not all)
75m	?	21	1990	Das kalte Herz	1-2	100	history	interest
76m	e	76	1947	Mörder sind...	2	2-3	plot, depiction	historical documents
77f	?	?	2004	Karla	0	10	?	?
78f	?	?	1996	Solo Sunny	3-4	20	history, GDR, entertainment	interesting
79m	?	?	2004	Karla	?	50	?	?
80f	?	?	1970	Fairyale, children's film	3	?	making of, past	?
81f	w	20	2004	Karla	0	40	?	?
82f	e	20	1992	Das singende, klingende Bäumchen	1-2	52	circumstances of their production, history	why not?
83m	e	55	1950	Fairyale	10	20	my own life	very good actors, little violence
84m	e	22	1980s	?	10	15	lost of my parents	?
85f	e	55	1957	Der kleine Muck	4-5	7	Fairyales	memories, interesting topics
86m	e	52?		Der kleine Muck	2	40	history in overview	history in overview
87f	e	53	1960	Das singende, klingende Bäumchen	4	30	personal history	plot, actors, directors
88f	e	54	1956?	?	0-1	5	?	good films, memories
89m	e	55	1956	children's film, fairytale	3	10	well made	I like good films regardless of which studio
90f	e	39?		Sieben Sommersprossen	5	?	GDR reality	memories
91m	e	26	1980?	?	4	100	my GDR past	my GDR past
92m	UK	42	1990?	?	2-4	15	plot, GDR culture and history	plot, GDR culture and history
93f	e	51	1959	Fairyale	2	50	problems, history	revived childhood
94f	e	45	1968	Wie heiratet man einen König	4	24	GDR past	GDR past
95?	?	?	1982	Aschenputtel	3	80	authenticity	own connection (Childhood)
96f	e	44	1968	Fairyale	1-2	100	own past, interesting actors, close to reality	own past, interesting actors, close to reality
97m	e	42	1975	Oma kam	1-2	60	memories, my view on it now, simplicity, without special effects	memories, my view on it now, simplicity, without special effects
98f	e	24	1980er	Fairyale	20	100	no special interest	childhood memories
99?	?	?	2004	Karla	2	15	they are historic documents	?
100f	e	24	1998	Heißer Sommer	2	200	nothing special	film is film
101m	e	22	1981	Drei Hasenüsse für Aschenbrödel	1	100	nothing special	because they are shown here
102m	e	65	1960	Das kalte Herz	2	5	topics	history, interesting topics
103f	e	54	1962	Mörder sind...	10-15	100	find own memories again	many were very good
104f	e	19	1994	Das kalte Herz	1-2	20	?	comparison to current films
105m	e	19	2004	Karla	2	20	topic	nostalgia, Ostalgia
106?	?	?	1983	Fairyale	2	7	interested in forbidden DEFA films	interested in forbidden DEFA films
107f	e	24?		children's film	1-2	58	?	coincidence
108f	e	40	1968	Der kleine Muck	1	12-15	?	childhood memories, close to life
109m	e	48	1960	Das singende, klingende Bäumchen	1-2	10	childhood and growing up memories	childhood and growing up memories
110f	e	67	1952?	?	10	7	actors, message, plot	many are very good
111m	e	18	2004	Karla	1	30	how they depict the past	how they depict the past
112f	e	50	1964?	?	3-5	20	memories of own development, the often unique way of filmmakers to show problems that were hidden back then	still worth seeing because they show the way of life in the GDR better and make history come alive again

Sieben Sommersprossen	it was one of the first sexual education films and is now hilarious to watch	0	100	0	0	0	50
?	?	20	30	50	0	50	10
?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Paul und Paula	it is GDR history. I had many problems myself (bad apartment, often intolerant people)	0	100	0	0	10	90
Paul und Paula	it was a part of our lives	?	?	?	?	?	?
Paul und Paula	?	50	50	0	0	50	50
Paul und Paula	music, plot	60	40	0	0	40	60
Schneeweisschen und Rosenrot	a nice fairytale	10	90	0	0	5	95
Untertan	plot, actors	5	10	0	0	10	20
Jakob der Lügner	humanism of the main character, great acting and directing, plot	0	50	50	0	50	50
Ernst Thälmann, Kleiner Muck	because I know the film from my childhood and youth	20	80	0	0	50	50
Paul und Paula, Spur der Steine	?	30	50	?	?	10	30
Spur der Steine	?	?	50	?	?	?	50
children's films	?	30	50	20	0	40	30
none	Don't know, was fascinated by it	10	90	0	0	20	80
Untertan	plot	10	90	0	0	0	100
Untertan	acting	0	100	0	0	0	100
none	?	10	90	10	0	5	95
Paul und Paula	good actors, good acting	50	50	0	0	50	50
fairytale	good historical film, Berta Waterstadt was a famous actress	0	100	0	0	100	0
Untertan	good plot, good actors	1	98	1	0	5	60
none	?	100	0	0	0	33	33
Neun Patronenhülsen	realistic depiction	5	95	0	0	10	90
Karla	nice story, good actors, good food for thought	100	0	0	0	50	50
all	reality, authenticity, documentary value	80	20	0	0	70	10
?	?	0	0	0	100 (Uni Kino)	10	80
Karbid und Sauerampfer	actor Erwin Geschdonek	1	99	0	0	0	100
?	?	0	0	0	100 (Uni Kino)	5	95
Karla	criticizes GDR system, very emotional	0	100	0	0	5	90
?	?	50	30	20	0	20	70
?	?	25	50	25	0	25	50
?	?	50	50	0	0	20	70
Einer trage des anderen Last	because of the tolerance towards other ideologies that was not common back then	?	?	?	?	40	30
Solo Sunny	plot, dialogues, texts, open-mindedness	60	20	20	0	60	20
?	typical situations in the GDR school system I had to suffer	50	50	0	0	50	50
Spur der Steine	expressed our way of life	90	10	0	0	50	50
Coming Out	critical dealing with GDR reality	30	30	40	0	40	20
Weihnachtsans Auguste	as an exception, German history is not depicted as crime	0	100	0	0	40	50
none	?	80	10	10	0	50	0
Paul und Paula	music, problems, actors	20	50	20	10 (home cinema)	0	50
Florentiner 73	?	30	70	0	0	33	33
Paul und Paula	strong person in the role of Paula is shown in her environment	30	40	30	0	50	20
paul und paula	good actors, authentic depiction, nice story	50	50	0	0	60	40
?	?	60	40	0	0	20	70
fairytale	simple depiction without a lot of equipment and special effects	10	90	0	0	10	80
?	interesting topic, plot and actors good	?	?	?	?	99	0
n	?	25	75	0	0	30	60
n	?	100	0	0	0	60	0
paul und paula	it was very progressive back then	30	20	0	50 (kleines Kino)	10	20
?	?	0	100	0	0	10	90
Karla	good effort of actors that fascinated audience, topic	5	15	50	30 (Schule)	30	40
Karla	it is honest, and broke taboos in its time that should not have been taboos	0	20	80	0	20	5
none	?	0	100	0	0	20	70
?	?	?	?	?	?	30	70
Sieben Sommersprossen	good actors, problems of youth	50	50	0	0	30	60
Paul und Paula	great acting, timeless problematic	20	80	0	0	50	50
Sie tanzte nur einen Sommer	my first love film	40	50	10	0	40	50
Karla	it shows how life forces one to make difficult decisions	100	0	0	0	10	80
Solo Sunny	found Jutta Hoffmann already in youth a very intensive, credible actress, topic is important to me	10	90	0	0	20	80

50		0 plot, actors	n	I think they are interesting when German actors play, although I watch more American films	n
40		0 interested in the topic	n	historical document, to understand generation of parents and grandparents as well as topics at that time	n
?	?	memories, commemoration	n	yes, to document for example life after WWII to the future generations	n
0		0 GDR history, own experience	n	realistic problems, not unrealistic, euphemistic, good actors	n
?	?	0 it shows why and how wars come to be, who is earning (still) nowadays	n	it shows why and how wars come to be, who is earning nowadays	n
0		0 was offered, convenient time	n	from time to time yes	n
0		0 was offered, convenient time	n	from time to time yes	n
0		0 pure interest	n	yes, it is important because they reflect the time	n
60		0 private interest	n	important: cultural legacy	n
0		0 memories of important topic, actor Camilla Spira, actor Brigitte Krause	n	yes, they are a part of history, not only of East Germany	y
0		0 because it reflects life of the proletarian family, and because I already saw it at its premiere	n	DEFA films should be screened more often because they are historically significant	DEFA films are better done than most contemporary films (USA films), there is no kitsch, and you need to think, no clichés
?	?	0 because of the actors (otherwise I am curious about the plot)	n	yes, not just because of nostalgia	n
?	?	0 because it is a good film	n	yes, for young people who should see these films as well	n
30		0 because I am interested in the fate of this woman and her family	n	yes, getting rid of negative and clichéd thinking, keeping memories, admiration of accomplishments of directors, actors, dramaturges, etc.	not enough time, I am very interested in it, good that plenty of literature exists, Domrose, Esche, Beyer, May etc.
0		0 I saw it many years ago on TV, I enjoyed it very much	n	a film can make people think and reflect, great topics better	n
0		0 interest	n	reflect period of time	n
0		0 I love old films	n	for me yes because I lived in that time	old memories come back, were not the worst
10		0 interest	n	yes because old times are remembered	n
0		0 it shows the hard life of a woman. An example for many young people	n	yes, especially for young people growing up without war and worries and live superfluously	films are not shown in cinema often enough. Too late at night when on TV
0		0 coincidence	n	not enough chances to watch films, although they are worthwhile seeing	GDR is our life, DEFA is a part of it
35		0 sounds interesting	n	yes, they are a part of history	n
33		0 offered at the assisted living facility	n	yes, to preserve the old films, and to show the history of the film itself	n
0		0 historical interest	n	yes, they reflect the time	n
0		0 I had no other plans	n	yes, because even nowadays it is important to question things and not to believe everything that is put in front of somebody	n
20		0 wanted to go to movies, interested, babysitter only	n	yes, as documents, because they are of artistic value, they tell better stories, they paint more interesting people than contemporary films	n
10		0 just happened	n	yes, they are historical documents	n
0		0 curiosity	n	yes, piece of past	n
0		0 offered at the university	n	yes, one can learn about life in the GDR	I know since today that there was the DEFA, I am from West Germany
5		0 offered at the university, mentioned in the flyer of the Einführungswocche	n	yes, they show another time, are connected with memories	I remember various fairytales I loved to watch as a child. I was in kindergarden during the GDR
10		0 ?	n	yes, the ones shown now reflect life back then and are interesting to me	n
25		0 interested in documents of that time	n	yes, information	n
10		0 ?	n	yes, learn about zeitgeist	n
30		0 interested in history	n	yes, to understand in retrospective better what happened	n
20		0 films by Zschoche or Plenzdorf are almost always good	n	yes, important, to understand GDR history	n
0		0 interesting topic, own experiences with school at the same time	n	yes, because there are good DEFA films and they cause discussion about the time back then and they are able to explain	n
0		0 I attend the screenings of the film club regularly	n	yes, important historical documents and artistically well made (not all)	the films are on average a lot better (artistically, thematically) than that what is screened in the major movie houses
40		0 got interested when reading the announcement in the paper	n	yes, coming to terms, memories	n
10		0 because my girlfriend invited me as a surprise	n	n	n
50		0 because my family is travelling and I can go out for once	n	yes, cultural legacy of GDR, important for film history	n
0		0 comparison to contemporary school system	n	yes, these films show history that should not be forgotten	n
33		0 interested in everyday life in former educational system	n	yes, historical documents	n
30		0 recommendation	n	yes, good for discussions	n
0		0 because it's a DEFA film	n	yes, coming to terms, refreshen nice and negative memories for me, getting to know of another part of Germany GDR, especially life there, for people from old FRG	n
10		0 curiosity	n	yes, to look back	n
10		0 going out	n	I don't pay attention if sth is a DEFA film	n
1		0 because I was interested in watching an older GDR films	n	they are important at least as historic documents (Zeitzeugen)	n
10		0 I always go to the Unikino on Fridays	n	yes and no, at least from another time and ideology	n
40		0 it's Friday, and I go to the kleines Kino on Fridays, and they always show good films	n	are films important at all? Can they be more than simple entertainment	n
0		0 interested in GDR films and situation back then	n	yes, treat important topics of their time	n
0		0 want to judge why it was forbidden	n	yes, to look at history	n
30		0 interested in old films	n	yes, it is important for the young generation to learn about life in the GDR	n
75		0 coincidence	n	yes, all films that treat problems and show potential solutions are important	n
10		0 got interested after watching a TV program about GDR	n	perhaps to examine political influence on media	your survey is hard to answer for a casual DEFA viewer
0		0 girlfriend talked me into it, positively surprised by film	n	yes, for historical and cultural learning experience	n
10		0 reminds of own time in school, teacher myself	n	today no more because of many American films	the films were always close to reality
0		0 my wife is teacher, I accompanied her	n	yes, they are important, good films, comment on values etc.	n
10		0 similar to own development	n	?	n
10		0 I was interested in films that were censored or forbidden	n	?	n
0		0 in the GDR	n	?	n
0		0 actress, topic	n	?	n

113	f	?	22	?	Das singende, klingende Baumchen	2	20	originality of GDR history	originality of GDR history
114	m	?	59	1953	fairytale	?	?	past, history	curiosity
115	f	?	51	1966	fairytale	?	?	content, history	curiosity
116	?	?	?	1954	Der kleine Muck	2-3	6-8	pedagogical value, are natural, close to life, sense for quality	inner content, education of actors of high quality
117	?	?	?	1956	Alarm im Zirkus	2	6-8	emotions, close to life	personal memories
118	m	e	66	1950	?	15	50	actors, directors, artistic language, topics	actors, directors, artistic language, topics and my view of today on things of the past
119	f	e	42	1968	?	5-10	40	my childhood, memories	interest in my homeland, depiction of the time "GDR"
120	m	e	64	1950	Mörder sind...	6	8	good actors, my youth, history	nostalgia, history
121	f	e	41	1970	?	10	50-60	?	?
122	?	?	?	1967	fairytale	4	50	look back	now the forbidden, critical view
123	m	e	51	1960	Mir nach Kanailen	1	200	nostalgia	to relive things
124	f	e	52	1969	Heißer Sommer	3	2	past, memories of GDR times	interesting
125	f	e	25	1990	fairytale	3-5	many	situations in society, conflicts	childhood memories, to understand parents and relatives better, to be able to talk about it
126	f	e	25	?	Karla	1-3	50	background information, everyday history	?
127	f	e	18	1990	?	?	?	different things	because they are very interesting
128	f	e	46	1965	König Drosselbart	20-50	100	still valid topics about life	memories of youth
129	m	e	27	1982	fairytale	4	50	historical document	memories, rediscovery of my own youth
130	m	w	31	1985	?	?	15	?	interest
131	f	e	51	1960	?	10-15	80	topics, actors	memories, interested in topics
132	f	w	64	1980	Der Untertan	0	6	Helmut Käutner, Wolfgang Staudte	historical reasons
133	f	e	40	1970	Alfons Zitterbacke	2	20	life in the GDR, against forgetting	actors
134	f	Japan	30	2000	Paul und Paula	10-12	5	everyday life of normal people	because I want to introduce everyday culture from the GDR in Japan
135	f	e	19	?	?	15	100	nothing special	because they are shown in theaters
136	m	w	39	1987	Haefte des Lebens	3-4	10-20	the quality of the actors	the quality of the actors
137	f	e	18	1996	Schneeweissen und Rosenrot	10-15	100-120	historical background, context	they are timeless
138	m	w	48	1975	?	3-5	100	historical context	historical context
139	m	w	35	1978	König Drosselbart	10	100-200	entertainment, historical document	entertainment, historical document
140	m	w	37	1977	Der Untertan	3	40-50	plot, actors	interest, nostalgia
141	m	e	26	childhood	fairytale	10	?	?	academic interest, entertainment, nostalgia, broaden my horizon
142	f	w	30	1980	Das kalte Herz	3	100-150	?	?
143	m	e	65	1950	Der kleine Muck	15	100-120	own history, filmmaker, professional interest, worked for DEFA	still up to date
144	f	e	?	1950	Der kleine Muck	8-10	50-60	GDR past, old actors, test the importance of these films	comparison
145	m	w	35	?	?	?	100	history of 1900-1950	history of 1900-1950
146	f	e	35	1975	children's film	5	20	psychological interpretation of people	psychological interpretation of people
147	f	e	34	1974	children's film	4-5	12	topics	more demanding topics, better dialogues, better camera movement
148	m	?	?	?	?	3-6	30-40	things that interest me in other films as well	why not?
149	m	?	22	2003	Mörder sind unter uns	4-5	500	history, style	because I don't know all of them yet, and many are very good
150	f	w	45	1968	?	10	50	art	they are good
151	m	FRANCE	25	2000	Paul und Paula	1	150	historical interest	historical interest, and some are very good
152	m	Russia	25	1992	Untertan	?	30	history	interest
153	m	Switzerland	48	1970	Spur der Steine	2	?	topics	topics
154	f	w	69	1979	Solo Sunny	5-6	not many	I love old films	love old films
155	m	e	56	1956	Das geheimnisvolle Wrack	20	?	memories, actors I know, environment I am used to	now I pay more attention to details I never noticed before
156	f	w	24	2004	Nackt unter Wölfen	1	100	films as source of history	mentioned in a university seminar
157	f	Italy	21	2004	Nackt unter Wölfen	?	150	I am interested in history	?
158	f	w	43	?	?	?	50	?	?
159	m	e	36	1973	film with Gojko Mitic	5	30-35	GDR topics, GDR history, memories	no reason why I should not watch them
160	?	?	?	?	fairytale	10-15	20-25	GDR films offer the opportunity to look at the history of the GDR	why not. Actors are very good, topics are still up-to-date

Lewins Muehle	?	100	0	0	0	80	20
Paul und Paula	close to reality	50	50	0	0	50	50
paul und paula	reality	50	50	0	0	50	50
Wege uebers Land	effort of actors, close to life, meaningful dialogues, historical truth, nature shots	30	70	0	0	50	50
Spur der Steine	same age as protagonist, memories of similar experience, identification with	20	60	20	0	30	70
Maerkische Forschungen	realism, artistic realization, make one think	20	60	20	0	20	60
Paul und Paula	own study for teaching profession 1981-85, then first steps in the educational system of the GDR, 1965 is three years after I was born, interesting to see how	20	80	0	0	5	80
Berlin Ecke Schoenhauser	good actors, plot	20	80	0	0	20	80
paul und paula	?	50	50	0	0	70	30
Spur der Steine	does not glorify socialism	50	50	0	0	20	70
anything with Manfred Krug	first heroes in my young life I never forgot	5	75	20	0	15	65
Paul und Paula	role models	20	80	0	0	0	100
Paul und Paula	good actors and plot, very realistic and emotional	40	20	40	0	10	50
?	?	80	0	20	0	30	70
Sieben Sommersprossen	because it is normal and has topics for the youth	45	45	10	0	25	50
Wege uebers Land	piece of history with many pro and con	10	80	10	0	45	45
n	dry humor, open and hidden criticism about shortcomings of the GDR	60	40	0	0	90	10
?	?	50	50	0	0	20	70
Bis dass der Tod uns scheidet	topic, effort of actors	5	95	0	0	10	80
Moerder sind unter uns	historical reasons because of the intended punishment	100	0	0	0	20	80
Paul und Paula	actors, music, attempt to find personal happiness	100	0	0	0	80	5
Heisser Sommer	almost everybody in Japan thinks there were no films as Heisser Sommer in the GDR	70	20	10	0	90	0
Das kalte Herz	?	5	50	45	0	33	33
Spur der Steine	political urgent questions are shown in an entertaining way	20	80	0	0	20	80
Die schoene Wassilissa	fairytale with Russian touch	10	0	90	0	30	50
?	?	50	50	0	0	80	20
Spur der Steine	Manfred Krug	50	50	0	0	40	40
Drei Haselnüsse für Aschenbrödel	nice story, well realized, Every year shown at christmas	80	20	0	0	90	8
Paul und Paula	saw it for the first time when I was 18	?	?	?	?	?	?
?	?	80	20	0	0	80	10
Jahrgang 45	?	90	10	0	0	95	5
Radup und Boel	story	90	10	0	0	95	5
?	differences in plot of book and film	100	0	0	0	100	0
Paul und Paula	love story	100	0	0	0	100	0
Karla	exciting topic, black-and-white film	80	20	0	0	80	20
?	historical aspects, interesting camera	100	0	0	0	100	0
Ehe im Schatten	filmic aspects, Goethe quotes, coming to terms with NS past from private view	90	5	5	0	50	0
Blonder Tango	good story, music, actors, everything	100	0	0	0	100	0
Paul und Paula	nice book, depiction of the GDR, emotional	100	0	0	0	80	5
Untertan	just nice	90	10	0	0	50	30
Paul und Paula	filmic realization	20	80	0	0	50	50
Spur der Steine	old film	100	0	0	0	0	100
?	?	0	100	0	0	5	90
n	shows the view on WWII, how the GDR sees the war	100	0	0	0	20	70
?	very good as document	100	0	0	0	60	0
?	did not like it	100	0	0	0	99	1
Spur der Steine	open confrontation with contradictions, goals and claims of the GDR	96	2	2	0	96	2
Haefte des Lebens	talks about life of Ms Hoelderlin. Protagonist Ulrich Muehe is excellent. Very successful are also music and narration	80	20	0	0	90	10

0	0	because it's shown in Frankfurt tonight	n	yes, historical consciousness	n
0	0	memory of the past	n	yes, are important to come to terms with past	n
0	0	memories	n	yes, are important to come to terms with past	n
0	0	I am a teacher myself and wanted to "find" myself again	n	yes, are important because especially children's films are emotionally and pedagogically valuable. Teach values	n
0	0	?	n	yes, important to learn about past	n
20	0	special interest, Kleines Kino	n	yes, important document of a time, also causes to respond to current problems	n
15	0	film unknown, was invited	n	yes, time of the GDR is history, should be continued to be taught and shown	n
0	0	?	a bit	yes, very actors were almost all good, effort	n
0	0	member of Kleines Kino, we included v this film in our program	n	yes, very	n
					the Gegenwartsfilme of the DEFA show the picture of socialism should be very well, the forbidden films show what it was really like, and that life in the GDR was lived critically as well. Many films were better than contemporary films because films without
10	0	never seen this forbidden film	n	yes, important to not forget this time, and discuss about it	n
30	0	curiosity	n	yes, important. In the past they had to be watched carefully.	would be plenty to talk for evenings
0	0	curiosity	n	yes, enlightenment	n
40	0	interesting topic	n	yes, reflects an important time. A lot would be forgotten otherwise.	n
0	0	?	n	?	n
				yes, they are important in some aspects because they show the world from a different perspective	n
25	0	because my mother took me	n		DEFA films are, in my opinion, well made and have great actors. Although they were so different, some, even not forbidden films looked deeply into GDR society
10	0	interested in forbidden things	n	yes, topics of life are today as important as back then. Keep history alive as example and warning	n
0	0	to support the Kleines Kino	n	yes, they show the filmmaking of the GDR and the GDR itself	n
10	0	because I am visiting Frankfurt/ Oder	n	yes, clearly for historical reasons	n
				yes, they are still important because they are part of our history and, in contrast to many films now, are and were demanding	n
10	0	actors, topic	n	yes	n
0	0	Hildegard Knef	n	yes, historical documents, other way of life than today	n
15	0	because I was interested in the story and I wanted to see the actors	n		n
10	0	because I wanted to see everyday life of the Seventies	n	yes, because DEFA films are a part of German history as well, and also film culture	n
33	0	because I am interested in Hans Fallada	n	?	n
0	0	interested in Hans Fallada	n	yes, important as historical documents and as art	n
20	0	interested in Fallada's life	n	yes, interesting to see how films were made back then, and what kind of films were made	n
0	0	good screening time, good actors, Fallada as topic	n	yes, only historical value as part of film history	I am from the West, but GDR films are mostly better than their West German counterparts
20	0	?	n	yes, historical documents, not only important for gdr history but also film history	n
2	0	like the book, always wanted to see film	n	yes, as historical document	Ostalgie is great
?	?	professional interest	n	yes	n
10	0	?	n	?	n
0	0	personal relation, historical context, historical tendencies	n	yes, attitudes of people towards history, closed area of history, shows forgotten parts of history	documentaries were more important than feature films. These films entertained, but one needed to decipher the "secret code" to read between the lines
0	0	see it again, quality of production	n	yes, to reflect own past, only know GDR can be really understood, good for GDR history	n
0	0	interested in plot	n	yes, films are important	n
0	0	topic, director	n	yes, films now are too commercial	n
0	0	interested	n	yes, better, more beautiful, deeper	n
0	0	historical aspects, interesting camera	n	not more important than other historical films	I generally do not watch films according to their production place, especially not for this film of 1947
50	0	I wanted to see it last year but took the time to do it now	n	yes, stylistically wonderful, interesting material about history	n
0	0	Maetzig	n	yes, they are good	why is there a survey about DEFA films? Do they have to justify themselves?
15	0	general interest	n	yes, historical review	n
20	0	because I have not seen it yet	n	yes, it is history	n
0	0	topic	n	yes, topics that are treated remain important	n
0	0	invited to the movies	n	?	?
				yes, although it was difficult to make films in the GDR, they show a relatively authentic and comprehensive picture of life in the GDR, better than any other medium. If one adds the DFF films made by the DEFA, the result would be much more representative	I have a lot of thoughts about that
5	0	now I pay more attention to details I never noticed before	sporadically discussions		
10	0	I was told to by my professor	n	?	n
40	0	work for university	n	yes, against forgetting	n
0	0	interest	n	?	n
2	0	I always wanted to see "Die Architekten"	n	do you think that UFA films are important nowadays	n
0	0	I always wanted to see "Die Architekten"	n	?	n

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